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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

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A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 24

JANUARY, 1917

Number 4

Peaceful Was *the* Night

By Grace Margaret Gallaher

Author of "The House of Flowers," "A Free Spirit," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

The little Jesus came to town.
With ox and ass He laid Him down.

Peace to the byre, peace to the fold,
For that they housed Him from the cold.

IT bears the name of a mighty saint of old; it was consecrated with bell, book, and candle; it is written down in the *scriptae ecclesiasticae* of the commonwealth. But those who love it now call it, as did the generations long numbered with the saints, "the Forest Fort Church." Nor was it as a stronghold of the Lord that the men who built its thick walls and barred its stout door so christened it, for it has proved an earthly fortress against the Indians yelling down the trail of Braddock's ruin, and through its tall, narrow windows the men of the country—aye, and the women, too—have fired upon red foes and white, when King George his Hessians harried our land.

It crowns a hill road that curves and curtsies, retreats gracefully and prances forward audaciously, like the figures of an old-fashioned dance, up out of the valley where the little forgotten village bustles about its tiny occasions. The church itself is old and gray. Trumpet and honeysuckle vines clasp it round; rose and lilac bushes hedge it in. The graves of those who, through the centuries, loved it and labored for its peace creep close under its eaves. Tall, strong

oaks and chestnuts keep sentinel watch over it in summer heat and winter blast. Beyond its moss-grown wall is an open yard and a shed for the horses and wagons, some of which journey fifteen miles to the Sunday service.

Within, it is a bare place, for this is a poor parish—uncolored glass in the windows, uncarpeted brick aisles, pine pews, and a wooden altar painted like marble, with pewter sacrament vessels brought from England in colony days. Yet rude tablets on the walls bear some of the splendid names of our history.

This winter night, however, lights glowed in the windows and lively voices flung echoes against the frosty hills. This was Christmas Eve, and the folk of the parish were trimming the church for early service to-morrow.

A young fellow ran out into the yard. "Yere's a wonderful sprangle of mistletoe, Polly," he shouted. "Want it?" "Deedy I don't." The voices sounded all over the hill in the utter stillness of the night. "Mistletoe's a heathen an' cayn't evah come to church. Yo' get me a right smart mo' holly branches."

The man disappeared into the forest. Presently the girl's voice reached him:



"Yere's a wonderful sprangle of mistletoe, Polly," he shouted.
 "Want it?"

"Hurry up. Joel says he 'bliged to shut up church an' go home."

"What's he gwine home so early fo' Christmas Eve?" The young man's arms were filled with glistening holly. "What kind o' sexton's he, anyhow?"

"It ain't early. It's half past ten," the girl told him reasonably.

"I got to be back yere at one o'clock an' 'gain at three, to watch out fo' the fiah." The old sexton himself came into view.

"All right. Just stick these in that

bare space by the pulpit, will yo'?" The young fellow thrust the branches into the old arms. "Listen, Polly. Let's yo' an' me ride ovah to give Merry Christmas to Betsy an' George."

"Let's." The girl began to pull on her coat. "Mothah, Bob an' I are gwine ovah to Greenaway, to say Merry Christmas to 'em there. You an' dad come, too?"

A little woman now joined the group.

"Right cold ride ovah that hill," she answered. "Dad an' me, we'll stop to help sistah fill the babies' stockings. Polly," for the girl was already by her horse, "I'm a-gwine to put the key of the house right yere—inside the do' in this crack—so whoever comes by first will find it an' open up. Then none of us won't have to shiver on the do'-step."

"All right," the girl called back, as her horse began to trot. "Tell Joel just to shut the church do', not lock it."

The workers came out of the church and separated down the road and over the bluff, some on horseback, some in ancient carriages, some on foot. Last of all, the sexton put out all lights but one above the altar, closed the door, and plodded down to his house in the hollow.

The night was cold and still and beautiful. An icing of snow covered

the ground, over which the slim young moon cast a veil that glimmered milky white. Unnumbered stars wove themselves into garlands, loops, scarfs of flashing splendor across the soft black carpet of the sky. Away off in the meadows, an owl hooted drolly; in the meres along the river, the bittern boomed. A long-eared, quivering-nosed Molly Cottontail hopped into the road, sat up high on her tail, then bumped off. A musky-breather fox padded onto Bun's cold trail, snuffed disdainfully, and slipped into the forest. After that all was hushed loveliness.

All the time the directions and explanations, good-bys and Christmas greetings, were being called back and forth from the church, a man had been hidden deep in behind the trees close to the road. He listened with tense care. Then, as two of the workers entered the forest by a trail, he vanished farther into its dimness. Cautious, furtive, he avoided each brittle twig or rolling stone, with a woodman's craft. Long after the pair had disappeared and even their voices had faded out, he lurked in the depths. At last, with the same stealth, he crept back into the road and the open moon trail.

He wore a heavy coat, but no hat, and the moon shone on thick, curly hair. The moon showed him, too, tall, strong, lithe, with the sure swiftness of youth in his motions. He stood as still as a stone, listening; then cast a steady, searching look into every corner of the wood and the churchyard. Satisfied, he stepped to the low wall, swung over it noiselessly, and made for the church door.

He lifted the worn latch, pushed open the door a crack, and bent down over the sill. The church had no vestibule or entrance hall, the door opening directly into the main room. He felt along the floor till his fingers found a groove in the brick masonry and

touched a cold, metallic something. With a snap, they drew out a house-door key.

The door sighed and groaned as if in reproof and swung wide away from him open against the wall. Conscious, now, of a faint light in the church and the warmth of fires, still on his knees, he looked before him; then rose as if drawn up by hands and stood, fixed, stricken into motionlessness.

A stove on each side of the door threw out into the twilight a glow that mingled with the shadows into a red dusk like the atmosphere of a dream, but over the altar a lamp burned with a small, clear light. Kneeling before the altar, but fronting him, was a woman, a baby in her arms. She was clothed in ardent blue, with something white over her shoulders, and her hair, dark and fine and loose, clouded around her. Her face was young and lovely, with a still, white beauty; in her eyes was awe and a forward-looking sorrow. One arm cradled the baby, the other reached a hand back to touch the altar. From the head of the sleeping baby rayed out a soft blur of light. Between the man and the altar the air seemed liquid, so that the mother and child floated before him.

He knew them instantly; they had hung in a babyhood picture above his bed—she in her blue dress, the pain of all the world in her young face, He in His happy innocency. Why was it given to him to see them in this lonely church this winter night?

He grew aware of the garlands of pine twining the pillars, of the holly berries, of the great star behind the altar, of the words in white letters against green: "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men." Christmas Eve! A vision sent to him! The key in his clutching fingers cut them. To him, a thief! A hot rush choked his throat, a hot mist burned his eyes. Old words, heard long ago, whirled in his brain:

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

And still the vision did not fade, remained motionless before his eyes—the Mother Mary, the Christ Child—and still he could not speak. Only his foot felt for the crack in the bricks, and his hand dropped the key back into it.

The church workers had barely gone, their voices still sounding happily on the air, the old sexton was just vanishing into the hollow, when up the road came a woman with a swinging step that marked her as country raised. A bag was slung over her shoulders, a large bundle filled her arms. She pushed open the gate of the churchyard silently and, velvet-footed, followed the path around the church to the sacristy.

Freeing one arm from her bundle, she pried open the loose-boned window, reached in, and pulled back the bolt of the door, all with the deftness of old habit. She groped along the black little room through the door into the chancel and sank, her breath fluttering on her lips, into a choir stall. There she threw off her coat and hat, shook her hair loose about her shoulders, and closed her eyes wearily. In the light of the altar lamp, she was a slender figure of a girl, white, thin, tired; yet in her eyes shone a kind of dancing light of adventure, of gallant endeavor. The bundle across her knees stirred and gave out piping sounds. The girl smiled—and her smile was very sweet—drew off the wrappings from the bundle, and held against her cheek a downy-headed, sleep-flushed baby.

"Hushie, hushie!" she crooned to the pink cheeks and yellow fluff.

The piping rose to a cry. The girl pulled out of her bag a bottle filled with milk; ran down the choir steps to one of the big stoves that stood at the end of the room, and thrust the bottle into the hot ashes in the pan beneath the fire box. While the milk heated, she

swayed up and down the brick aisle, cradling the baby and singing in a murmur an old, wandering air, the refrain of which was:

The little Lord Jesus,
No crying made He.

Presently she was seated in one of the pews near the fire, and the baby was gurgling down the hot milk. The milk drained, the baby sank into sleep again, deeper and deeper. The girl watched it, smoothing its dress with her fingers and wrapping it closer in a fine white shawl. Her face was still and sad, and all the shine of romance was dimmed in tears. Yet her small, square chin did not quiver, the soft fold of her lips did not break. She kissed the baby's hands, then his pink dab of a cheek, lightly as a butterfly might lip a flower and draw sweetness therefrom. Then she raised him up in her arms and stepped out of the pew.

Up the aisle, through the chancel, past the choir, to the altar itself she went, and at the altar knelt down. She made a nest of the warm cloak in which the baby had been wrapped, tenderly laid the little creature in it, drew from her breast a letter in an envelope with a name written on it, and pinned that to the little skirt. Over the altar, gleamed a great white Christmas star of everlastings, but behind it, hidden by the garlands of green and red and white, hung the sorrowful Christ. With closed eyes her groping hands found this, touched it, and clung fast, her lips moving in a prayer that, like her hands, groped in blackness to find the Son of God.

In the dim, still church something sounded—a step, the creak of the door, and then its heavy swing open. She caught the baby up into her arms, turned on her knees, one hand steadying her body by the altar, and faced whatever might be.

From the open doors of the stoves

streamed out a clouded, rosy light. Through this haze, she could see a strip of far-off sky set with one blazing star. In the door itself stood—man or God? She could not tell. Some one tall and strong and beautiful, with golden hair, aureolelike around his forehead, and eyes blue and deep and shining. His hands were closed before him; his face was transfigured like that of one who sees things not to be told. Surely this was the very One for whom the wreaths were trimmed, the holly decked out, the church lighted, the carols sung—Christ, Son of Mary and Son of God. She held her baby toward him that He might bless it.

They looked and looked at each other in a trance of unreality, the man who was a thief and the girl with the forsaken baby. She spoke at last, slowly, but clearly, for she had no fear.

"What yo' want yere?" Her voice was soft, slurring all the hard sounds,

and the cadence of her speech was one the man had heard in his cradle.

"What yo' want yere?"

He, too, had the mellow drawl of all the men of her familiarity.

She came up from her knees and went down the aisle toward him. He met her halfway.

"Are yo' hungry?" She studied the thin pallor of his face. He looked as she often felt.

"'Deed I am!" He smiled at her and all his beauty glowed.

"Come in yere."

Her hand motioned him to the warm pew by the stove where she had sat.



"I took yo' fo' Mary, the Virgin, an' that there fo' her Little Son."

She drew out of her bag bread, meat, and more milk.

"Yo' eat, too."

"I wouldn't wish to, thank yo'. I had mah suppah back to the tavern."

She watched him eat quickly and hungrily, yet not wolfishly; and while she watched, she tore the letter into pieces and scattered them on the floor.

"Mah gracious! That's good. I ain't eat to-day."

He was tall, powerful, and beautiful as she had seen him in her vision, but, near, he showed tired and haggard lines his youth should not have borne.

"I reckoned yo' was—— Standin' yere in the do'—yo' seemed like yo' was a kind o' vision," the girl told him confusedly.

"I took yo' fo' Mary, the Virgin, an' that there fo' her Little Son." He smoothed the baby's dress reverently.

Neither spoke for a time, still in the spell of their awe. Then he said gently:

"I reckon I have saw yo' befo' in these pahts?"

"I was bawn an' raised right yere, ovah to Sunny Slope Fahm."

"Then yo're Hector McKimmon's girl——" He stopped in confusion and patted the baby again.

"I'm Hallie McKimmon that ran away to town to sing," she finished quietly. "Yo' face is right friendly, too. Seems like I ought to know yo'."

"I was bawn an' raised right yere, mahself. Mah fathah owned Gray Ledges."

"Then yo're Houston Doyne that ——" She, too, caught herself up.

"Run off to town to get away from mah stepfathah. I reckon there's a pair o' us drawed in this deal."

He laughed under his breath, because of the baby.

"Listen. I went to a coon hunt back along with yo'." The girl spoke out of a muse in which she wandered among paths long untrod.

"Deed yo' did. An' yo' was to a

cohn roast ovah to Lucy Sleight's once, too. Why, we-all are ol' friends."

She slid out a hand to him, and he took it in his gently.

"Mighty little trick yo' was to run away from home," he ventured.

She drew away her hand, first pressing his in a light, quick touch.

"Mah fathah's a right ha'sh man. He didn't feel to let me have nary variety, an' he wouldn't let me sing exceptin' just in church. I got a right pow'ful voice"—she dropped her eyes till the lashes lay on her cheeks—"an' folks always praised it, too. I honed to sing befo' folks in big halls an' theaters an' like that. I ran away to town."

"Did you sing there?"

"Deed I did, an' I got a heap o' money, till baby came an' I couldn't sing any mo'."

"How ol' is it?"

"Seven months. Ain't he a great, big boy? He's had all he wanted, always. I got afearod fo' him in town. That's why I brought him out yere."

The man turned away his eyes that they might not ask questions against his will.

The girl looked straight at the light above the altar, and spoke softly, without emphasis, as if she were summing up for herself alone her life. The back of the church was twilight dim, the surroundings that make confidences flow.

"He's been daid 'most a year." The man guessed of whom she spoke. "I reckoned I was his wife same as if we'd been wedded in church, but he——" Bitter tragedy swept her face, then passed into patience. "He's daid. I 'low I was a mighty triflin', ignorant girl. I didn't look out fo' myself like I ought." Something in the man's face caused her to shift responsibility in part to her own shoulders, lest he forget he accused one now gone to other judgments.

"Warn't it dreadful strugglin' wo'k fendin' fo' yo'self an' the baby?"

She flashed him a look haunted by days of toil and nights of terror.

"What'd yo' do?"

"Sang."

"Where?"

"Every place." Again that look. "But mah voice is mighty weak still. I cayn't make it through in town."

"So yo've come home?"

Her eyes denied this with mournful insistence.

"Ain't yo' gwine home to Hector McKimmon?"

"I wrote mah fathah when—he—died, tellin' him how I was done with foolishness, an' I begged him to fo'give me an' let me come home to be his girl again."

"What he say?"

"I ain't got any daughter. Yo' ain't got any fathah nor mothah nor home. Nary word mo'."

"Yo', his *onliest* child!"

"I'm a-gwine West," the girl went on. "Folks say it's easier fo' a girl—like me—out there. But I daren't to take baby—the journeynin's an' the wildness an' maybe the hungriness of it. I came on the train home, an' I was gwine to Tobin's, but there ain't a stop there like there used to be, so I had to get off at St. George's. It's a pow'ful long walk, an' baby's a load to tote. It took me mo' time than I'd counted on. I'd studied it out how I'd get home 'bout eight o'clock an' lay baby on the kitchen do'step, with a little letter to fathah pinned to him. Fathah always goes round outside to see if things are like they ought to be fo' night. When he found baby an' saw how sweet he is an' heard how I was a-gwine away fo'evah, he couldn't be hahd to him, could he?"

"No!" cried the man to the appeal in her eyes.

"When I was too wore out to go on, I minded me of the church, an' how

it was Christmas Eve an' 'twould be warm an' safe, an' how mah own old ministah would find him in the mawnin' early an' take him to fathah."

"You'll leave him yere?"

She took the hand of the sleeping baby in hers, pressing it very softly.

"Not now. I looked up an' I thought it was a—a—vision. 'Tain't nary use to tell me 'twas just yo' in the do'. I saw—fo' a moment—how it was Christmas Eve, an' Mary didn't have nary place to lay her Son, an' how folks were against her, maybe, an' how she brought Him up to be—to be—like Him in the do'. I'm a-gwine to take mah baby with me wherevah I go. We'll live or die together." Suddenly her eyes burned with their old clear, high adventure. "An' I got a feelin' right in mah heart it will be live!"

"That's yo'!" His voice caught her courage. On that note, he dashed into his own story.

"Sistah, I ran away from home, too. Mah trouble was a stepfathah. I reckon yo' all have heard tell o' Elizabeth Doyne's marriage to a feller half her years, that got hold o' her fahm an' her purse an' all she had?"

The girl nodded.

"I lit out. I wasn't but seventeen, but I could do a man's work all right." He flexed his great arm muscles over his head; he was a young godling for beauty and strength. "I was mighty foolish an' triflin' careenin' round town an' spendin' mah money free fo' all, but I didn't hahm nary souk, man nor woman."

He watched anxiously for her belief, quick coming in eyes and smile.

"Then mah mothah died, and mah stepfathah sold the fahm—my fathah's fahm—right quick an' took himself off some place. A city's a pow'ful lonesome spot sometimes."

"Oh, yes!" she breathed.

"There's a many reasons why men



The girl leaned against a tree. "I'm just sort o' breathless."

drink. I reckon lonesomeness is a good few."

"Yo' don't any mo'," she filled his pause.

"Good reason!" A bitter laugh. "He was a dead-beat tramp—cut yo' throat fo' ten dollars. He made at me in Tom's Hang-out, an' I knocked him galley-west. It killed him. They sent me to prison fo' two years."

"How long yo' been out?"

"Nine weeks. Mah hair's growed, but some othah things won't evah grow fo' me. One o' them is folks' confidence in me. Nobody wants a jailbird to shovel snow, even, fo' him. I'm goin' West, too, but I wanted one look at the ol' fahm first."

Now it was the girl who turned away her eyes from questions.

He pulled out of his pocket a lean leather bag, such as countrymen carry, shook out into his hand a dime and a five-cent piece, then risked his next fence.

"Yo' heard those folks say they'd leave their do' key right yere?"

"Yes."

"I'm a jailbird an' I was gwine to be a thief, but I put the key back. Yo', there by the altah, with the baby—I been raised religious—" He could not go on; he dropped his face in his hands and held it there. "I'll make mah own way honest or—I'll—starve!" came hoarsely through his fingers.

The girl drew his hands down.

"Let me! I'd love to!"

She squeezed something into his palms.

He stared at it stupidly. It was a ten-dollar bill.

His young face was stained deep red; then it paled to manhood. He laid the money back in the baby's lap.

"Thank yo'," simply. "I couldn't go fo' to take it."

"I don't need it. I got mo' fo' mah-self."

"He'll need it." He touched the sleeping face with the tip of his finger.

They sat very still in the warm twilight. Then the girl said in a whisper:

"I was christened right in this church, an' so was fathah. I sang right ovah in that cornah."

"Mah church's over to the Fo'ges."

"I know it. Ain't that a right pretty road runs to yo' place?"

"It crosses a trout brook where I used to fish, an' there's the deepest swimmin' hole on beyond."

"I hate the city!" cried the girl in a little gasp.

"Oh, Lo'd, yes!" he agreed. "I was bawn to be a fahmah. I hone to feel the ol' plow stilts buck again' mah hands an' smell the wet earth turnin' up."

"An' see the first snowdrops an' the crocuses peep up through the ground in spring, an' bring the little ducks an' chicks an' lambs in by the fire when the nights are rough!"

"An' ain't it bully to taste the apple tang in the air, come fall, when yo' pile up the winesaps an' the seek-no-furthers undah the trees?"

"An' the wild grapes in the woods a frosty night, when yo're ridin' home in the moonlight!"

They were smiling now. Presently they were deep in the burden of the old, glad gypsy days before they had been ever sick or sorry, the immemorial magic of youth.

And the old false angels vanished
As the shining little sisters
Of the forest and the field
Lifted up their quiet faces
With the truth they half revealed.

The baby slept on; the cold hardened in the forest; the moon swam through the blue-black sky; the clock behind the door ticked out the last of Christmas Eve. Still the man and the girl wandered hand and hand through sunlit meadows or along the marge of silver-tinkling brooks.

The coals in the stove dropped with a clash. The man sat up stiffly like one aroused from a dream. He looked at the clock.

"Hallie," he said quickly, "it's one o'clock. Merry Christmas!"

Strange as the greeting was to those two strays, the girl answered gayly:

"Merry Christmas, Houston!"

"We got to get 'long out o' this mighty lively. The sexton's a-comin' back."

The girl stood up like a soldier.

"I'm rested now. We can walk over to the junction an' take the milk train through the Gap. It goes 'bout four o'clock."

She included him in her plan as if unconsciously. Without a word, he slung her bag over his shoulder and took the baby in his arms.

"Yo're right handy." She wound the shawl around the bundle he carried awkwardly.

They stood for an instant looking at the star shining white on the altar, then stepped out into the night.

They made their way down the ravine, the man breaking a trail in the snow crust and walking with care. The air was like liquid diamonds, shining, cutting; even the star rays seemed to prick icily. The girl leaned against a tree.

"I'm just sort o' breathless." Her hand against her side.

He stood in front of her to shield her while she rested.

In a few moments she sat down on a stone.

"I'm a pore, no-account creature." She tried to laugh up into his face.



In his old barn, watched by the kine and the ass, the Divine Family was revealed
like his wander-



to him this Christmas morning. And as he looked and looked, the mother grew
ing daughter.

He slid his arm into hers and she leaned on it. They went on in silence. Suddenly she drew away from him.

"Listen! I can't go on. Yo' make out to get the train."

He paid no heed.

"That a house yondah?"

She raised her languid eyes to where a gaunt stone specter reared its bones. "It's the old mill. All tore out it is, but the barn used to be right snug."

He lifted her by the hand.

"Come!"

The barn was dark and warm, and smelled sweet of summer fields buzzing with bees.

"Hay!" as he pulled open the door.

"There's stock, too," for the air was full of soft breathings and long sighs.

He lighted one match after another by which the barn showed mows deep with hay and stalls of horses and cattle. At the far end, a wise old donkey head was thrust over the stall bar.

Houston seated the girl on a stanchion, lighted the barn lantern, and began to scoop out a hollow in the mow.

"Now," he said and made her stand up, his arm around her shoulder. "I got yo' a right warm little bed, yo' an' him. I'll leave the lantern fo' yo', an' I'll be in the small mow in the lean-to, if yo' need me."

"Houston"—his name sounded musical in her lingering voice—"yo're good to me, 'deed yo' are."

He drew away his arm and stood from her.

"Listen, Hallie, I got to say it. Let me take yo' West." Her clear gaze questioned him. "It ain't like we were strangers. We were both bawn right yere in this valley. We got the same friends an' some o' the same kin. We can fo'get all that's been mean and sad back o' us. We can leave it yere in the East."

The baby cried out in its sleep, and she held out her arms for it. Houston shook his head.

"Let him be mah baby, too. I'll give him mah name an' mah fathahhood. He shan't evah know."

"Yo' mean—"

"We'll find the parson right below yere, an' we'll be wedded man an' wife Christmas mawnin'. Don't it sound kind o' sweet to yo'?"

Still the girl's eyes glowed bright and strange on him.

"I can take care o' the three o' us out there, 'deed I can, mah little girl. Look at mah shoulders, look at mah back—ain't they broad enough for three? I know right much 'bout fahmin' an' stock, too, raised right 'mong 'em, you might say."

The words halted on her lips.

"What-all makes yo' want to do it?"

"Because I loved yo' the first minute I set eyes on yo' there in the church, when I thought yo' was sent right from heaven to me. Yo' were, too. An', ladybird, I reckoned maybe yo' thought somethin' o' me, too."

She spoke strangely.

"I nevah loved him. I was lonesome an' afear'd, an' he said he'd take care o' me an'—"

"Don't! He's daid—it's all daid. But yo' an' me an' this little trick, yere, we're alive an' it's Christmas Day."

She held out a thin little hand to him.

"Christmas gift." It was just a thread of sound.

He put the hand to his lips.

"Christmas gift—darlin'."

Upon those two strays—wild boy, wild girl—the beauty and the holiness of Christmas shone.

Dawn flowed greenish white over Fresh Spring Valley; already the sword of the sun quivered keen above the rim of the hills. Hector McKimmon had "slept in" and was tugging on his clothes in a hurry. The house was full of the coaxing odor of hot coffee, fried chicken, and waffles—Christmas breakfast. His little twig of a wife, with a

face set dauntlessly to front all perils, even death itself, called sweetly:

"Christmas gift, daddy."

The man winced at the name.

"Christmas gift, Nanny Jo." He tried to be cheery. "But that an' all the rest o' it's got to wait while I fodder my stock. I can't make the beasts suffer for my sloth." His tough Scotch blood blurred in every strong syllable. "I wish I could find a good man to keep on the farm."

"Daddy"—again the name—"I dreamed last night that daughtie came home. Dreamed on Christmas Eve an' told on Christmas morn, they say comes true 'most——"

"That dream can't ever come true! I have shut my door an' my heart against her. I ain't got any daughter. I never had a daughter."

He strode out of the room and the house without a look at her quivering face. He passed the ruin of his barns, burned in the fall, swung out of his farm, down the road, and up to the mill barn, where, since the fire, he had housed his hay and cattle.

He jerked open the big door and looked in, the risen sun peering over his shoulders. The barn was dark and

still. One thin, bright sun ray shot through the dust a golden light upon a meek cow, two horses, the gray old donkey—and upon something else.

In his old barn, watched by the kine and the ass, the Divine Family was revealed to him this Christmas morning—Joseph, strong and good, Mary, white and weary-eyed, but lovely, with the Child asleep in her arms.

And as Hector McKimmon looked and looked, the mother grew like his wandering daughter.

"She's my only one. If I, her father, cast her off, what can I ask of strangers. If I can only find her——"

The mother stood up.

"Daddy!" piteously.

The saint moved close to her. He spoke out stoutly.

"She's mah wife, suh, or will be in an hour."

McKimmon held out trembling hands and surprisingly found in them the child, soft and warm and wondering-eyed.

All the things he would say ran from him. He sobbed out just one simple old phrase: "It's Christmas!" and drew them all into his arms.

THE KING

GONE are summer's blossoms, gone the goldenrod.
The fairies of the meadow trip not the whitened sod.
The dryads of the woodland are in their oaken keeps.
The glade is swathed in slumber and the wide field sleeps.

First the virgin princess, in her clinging green;
Summer brought her nuptials; fall the dowager queen;
Last of brave succession from the tender spring,
Winter in his ermine is the stern war king.

Rest to fay and dryad. Rest to shrub and tree.
But list you to the bugle from the frost-camped lea.
And who would play the shepherd, and who would pine the rose,
When spears of winter glisten and the heart's blood glows?

EDWIN L. SABIN.

The Christmas Commandment

By D. E. Wheeler

NOT in the thundering prohibitions of the Decalogue will you find the commandment that expresses Christmas, but in the words of the Nazarene Himself to His disciples, in the fifteenth chapter of John, where He says: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." And shortly afterward, in the same chapter, the Master repeats this injunction, knowing full well how supremely difficult was the task set in those few words, and how easily forgotten in the midst of the pursuits, rivalries, and vanities of the world. There is a tradition that John was so impressed by this *summum bonum* of life that, in his old age, he was content to epitomize all his teaching in the phrase: "Children, love one another."

Undeniably, this personal commandment of Christ's embodies the very essence of the day we celebrate as His birthday, when even the meanest mortals try to attain, in some degree, that state of felicity in which love for another or others transcends mere self and its seeking. At least temporarily, we make an effort to lose our insistent ego in the happiness of some one else, and in proportion as we achieve it so is our joy multiplied. If we cannot eclipse self at this season, then Christmas is not for us and we might as well be Martians or marionettes. Observers have often remarked that something happens to the world at Christmas that makes it a better and a more enjoyable place than at any other time. What happens is the simultaneous release of love for neighbor, friend, and kin that is without stipulation or demand. It is an emotional fruition of brotherly love out of the thorns of everyday life that might aptly find its symbol in the glowing holly berry amid its prickly thicket.

Thoughtless people tell us it is sheer mockery to prate and preach of loving one another, even for a day, when there is so much hatred and strife in the world, and when we are all at one another's throats, either literally or figuratively. Likewise, the idle-minded scoff at the divine commandment that has come down to us, and take pains

to point out how impossible and incompatible with life and progress it is. God Himself, they elucidate, has ordained that man must forever fight to accomplish any high and worthy destiny. But we feel this dictum to be physically sound and spiritually hollow, for our Christmas commandment assumes that mankind is more than physical, and that through the complete exercise of love we may realize God's own remedy against every terrestrial evil.

Gibing at the words and meaning of this beautiful commandment of Jesus of Nazareth, holding them up as empty sophistry and devoid of reality, is evidence of profoundest ignorance; for nobody with any historic or philosophic perspective fails to see that there is more love in the world for our fellows than ever, and that most of the hatred is artificial or foisted. This may appear an astonishing statement in the face of a gigantic war and widespread industrial unrest and antagonism. But let us reflect a moment.

The majority of us probably consider war as an indisputable proof of hate, but actually it is more often the result of the biologic or economic necessity of a race in a desperate position—the outcome of greed or growth or both. In the fighting ranks, men seldom feel hate toward the enemy. Their emotion is far more impersonal. As nearly as we can describe it, the feeling is rather one of automatic extermination of those who appear to threaten their lives and welfare; and it is a game of death for an ideal whether that ideal be right or wrong. Instead of hatred, enemies on the field have been known to admire or pity one another, and even to offer succor in case of helpless suffering. This tenderness and regard for an enemy have sprung from the teaching of Christ, whose commandment to "love one another" has rooted deep down in the heart of humanity in spite of all surface phenomena.

Nothing illustrates war as a nightmare of illusion more than its cessation, when victors and vanquished embrace and mingle tears and cheers of rejoicing. Pagans, barbarians, and other non-Christians do not betray such sympathy and fellowship for an enemy. And our hospital service on the battle front would alone testify to

the power and permanency of the commandment in St. John. It is not too much to predict that, ultimately, more and more translated into life, this commandment will make war impossible, and already there are signs of such a consummation.

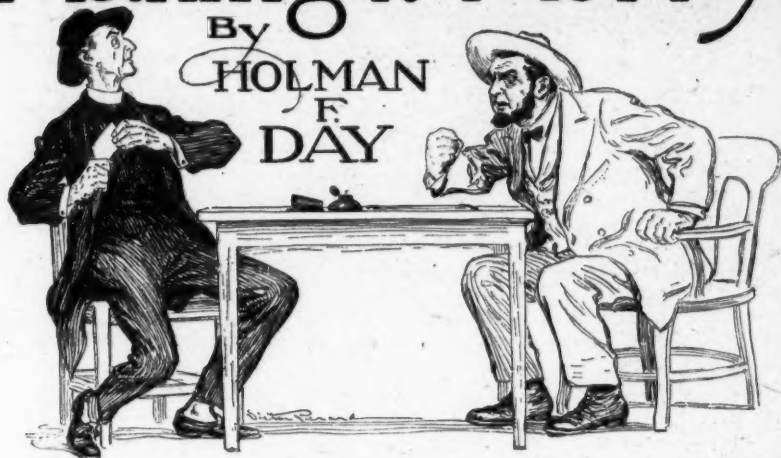
Hate in the field of industry may seem to flourish, but it is really waning. Despite all disputes and strikes and injustices, there is an increasing understanding and even affection between the opposing factors. Better hours and higher wages are the order of the day, not the exception. Arbitration of industrial difficulties is gaining headway. Capital and Labor are realizing their interdependence, their mutual interests and aims. If we are shortsighted enough to see in these changes nothing but legal force and public opinion, then we forget the source of their whole action—the growing love of man for his fellow. *We should not lose sight of this fundamental and significant fact nor fail to celebrate it this Christmas.*

Daily life and its manifold routine witness the constant kindness that springs from disinterested love of mankind. Never was there an epoch of history when public and private charity was so widely and wisely applied, all faults admitted. Money and service rendered the poor of our time are unparalleled in the annals of benevolence. cursory reading of reports and findings will corroborate us. And surely we have all remarked the increasingly charitable spirit of the everyday crowd! How many times have we seen a weaker man championed at the hands of a bully by a passing stranger! Any under dog easily finds a defender. A lost child will arouse the most absorbed business man so that he will forget his own interests to relieve the youthful distress. Ready and willing are the hands outstretched to assist a blind or a crippled person on his way. Street beggars have time and again grown rich on public pittances, until the authorities put an end to the imposition. And criminals are no longer abhorred, for in our greater charity we have come to regard them as victims of disease or environment.

All of these things may be commonplaces, too trifling to note, yet they flower from our Christmas commandment, which, fulfilled, makes us the sons of God.

Making It Merry

By
HOLMAN
F.
DAY



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

A more astonishing and original Christmas celebration never took place than this banquet in honor of Hiram Look. Do not read if you object to humor at Christmas time.

MONDAYS, ten to twelve o' the forenoon, in a bare room over Bibber's Pharmacy, Cap'n Aaron Sproul devoted to such matters as came before him as president of the Scotaze board of trade.

On this particular Monday, one of the matters that came was the Reverend Ancillus Joy—and his name did not at all fit the expression on his countenance. His thin lips sagged querulously, the nip of the December frost had wrung his bony beak till its vivid hues were most unseemly adornment on the face of a clergyman, and his sad eyes dripped tears that had been distilled by the chill wind.

Cap'n Sproul did not appear to be in an amiable mood, either. He scowled at his visitor.

"Merry Christmas!" he snapped.

"But it isn't Christmas yet—not for a week," protested Reverend Joy, in dismal tones.

"Well, it's the only merry thing I can think of at present writing, even if it ain't here," growled the cap'n. "I didn't know but it might cheer you up a little."

"It is very difficult to cheer me up on a blue Monday, sir. Blue Monday is a clergyman's ever-recurring torment. My depression following a sermon is deep—very deep. I suppose that statement surprises you."

"Not at all!" returned the cap'n crisply. "I have heard the same complaint about sermons from folks who go to church."

"That remark is not in very good taste," said the clergyman, blinking sullen resentment.

"I was only agreeing on general lines with what you said—and I make it a point to agree with a parson."

"Now that I have forced myself out of the grateful seclusion of my study to come here, I trust you are going to

agree with me in regard to the Christmas board-of-trade banquet."

Cap'n Sproul refrained from reply, and the expression on his face was not altogether reassuring as to his intention to stick to the point he had mentioned.

The visitor pulled a paper out of his pocket and unfolded it.

"Having been selected as toastmaster, I have prepared in my humble way a program to be printed on the menu. I have captioned it: 'Grand Banquet, Testimonial from Admiring and Loving Citizens to the Honorable Hiram Look, Chief of the Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association.'" The Reverend Joy delivered that in sonorous pulpit tones. "And underneath I have appended this sentiment in verse:

"Blow, trumpet, blow! Beat, martial drums!
Behold, our conquering hero comes!"

The cap'n was silent.

"Can you suggest anything better?"

"Only that perhaps you ain't making it strong enough to suit Hime Look. If you add, 'Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him lord of all,' he might be willing to lay off that new plug hat of his and take you at your word."

"I must protest at your flippant manner of treating a sacred hymn!"

"Is that from a hymn?" asked the cap'n innocently.

"Perhaps if you attended church more regularly, you would recognize a hymn when you heard it, sir."

Cap'n Sproul relapsed into silence.

"Now I am to ask you what part in the exercises you assume to yourself as president of the board of trade. I have left a blank line."

"Leave it blank. I have had nothing to do with getting up this banquet. I don't believe that's what we organized a board of trade for. The Ancients have been doing the vittle-stuffing job for this town. Let them have the field. I ain't going to be advertised as head-

ing a board-of-trade band of cutworms."

"But you are going to be present. You have said so."

"I shall be present. I shall rap on the table with the handle of my knife and say, 'Sit down!' And after that I shall keep my setting!"

Reverend Mr. Joy pinched his lips and wrote in a line.

"What are you putting down, there?" demanded the cap'n.

"Opening remarks by Captain Aaron Sproul, President."

"If you want to put yourself on record as twisting 'Sit down!' into opening remarks, go ahead. What next?"

"Guitar solo by Jared Sparks Grant."

"Will they be eating then?"

"Of course! And I am sure that the soft, beautiful strains will——"

"Will, eh? With them knives and forks going—with them Ancients working both arms like they was pumping ship on a lee shore—Jared Grant will stand about as much show as a speckled-back cricket in a boiler shop."

Reverend Joy gave the cap'n a distinctly unchristian stare. Then he went on:

"Fife-and-drum selection by the Ancients' drum corps."

"That's a nice thing for folks who are trying to eat their vittles in peace! With old Bart Flanders hammering on that bass drum, it'll be a wonder if they don't put out their eyes with their forks and slash their mouths with their knives."

Mr. Joy refolded his paper.

"Seeing how you regard my humble plans, I do not think you will care to listen to the rest of my program," he suggested stiffly.

"No, sir! Not if the rest of it ain't any more sensible than what you have given me."

"Captain Sproul, it is quite plain that you have very little of the Christmas spirit in you."

The cap'n grunted.

"You will allow me to say that you seem to be trying to pick a quarrel with me—deliberately pick a quarrel with a minister of the gospel!"

"This is a Monday—you ain't in church—you're in the board-of-trade office—and you're here as toastmaster of a banquet I don't approve of. And I'm talking to you just as I would talk to anybody who was teaming a gang who propose to gobble down vittles that it'll cost the board at least two hundred dollars to pay for. The minute we get a little money in the treasury, it seems to be the spirit in this town to unbutton vests and reach for knives and forks. We'd better use that money for some sense and reach for some new industries in Scotaze."

"Having views so pronounced, it may be possible that you can suggest a program, sir!" But the reverend gentleman's tone was not amiable.

"It ain't my show!"

"But you seem to intimate that you could furnish something worth while if it were your show. Is that so?"

"Having the consolidated grabbers and eaters of this town penned in, I would show them up as a lot of cussed old caterpillars who can't crawl up to date and who don't intend to. And my idea of something worth listening to is a speech on how to get a shoe factory to locate here and how to extend a water-works system."

"All that business can be attended to at a public meeting, sir," stated the clergyman, stuffing his paper back into his pocket and rising.

"You'll have to have something to eat if you're going to collect a public meeting in this town. And when they're eating, they're so full that grub runs out of their ears and they can't hear anything. So what's the use?"

"I bid you good day," said the Reverend Joy.

"I bid you the same and again wish

you a Merry Christmas," returned the cap'n.

But not by word or countenance did the clergyman return the greeting.

It was drafty and chill out of doors. No snow had fallen, and the ground was as hard as iron. However, the Reverend Joy declared to himself, as he shuffled along the sidewalk, that he felt more comfortable in the dreary open than he had felt in the board-of-trade office under the cold stare of disapproving Cap'n Sproul.

And then of a sudden some of the gloom of blue Monday was lifted from him.

He met Hiram Look.

Mr. Look wore his shiny plug hat cocked on one side of his head, a big cigar was stuck at an assertive angle in the corner of his mouth, and he radiated good cheer as he wrung the limp bundle of bones that served the clergyman for a hand.

"Harlo, elder, old top!" he shouted. "Just going to or coming from a funeral?"

"I am coming from a most——"

"Well, come out of it, whatever it is! This is the season to be merry and gay."

"But I have just——"

"Forget the grouch, old boy!" He dug his thumb into the parson's ribs and winked, and the Reverend Joy's face lightened a bit in spite of the ache in his fingers, the pang in his dented side, and the squirming of his soul at the hearty freedom of the old showman's demeanor. "I'm on," declared Hiram. "They have been trying to keep it away from me, but I've been in the circus business too long not to be able to find out which shell the pea is under. They're going to give me a banquet, and you're billed on the full sheets as the toastmaster. Ain't that so?"

He hit the minister a blow on the back that sent Reverend Joy staggering.

"Don't lie," admonished Hiram, wagging big finger under the nose that the shrewish wind had painted in fresh crimson. "I can see that you're going to deny because they have asked you to do it! But they mustn't expect a minister to do their lying for 'em. Seeing it's going to be my show, we'd better get together on it. I don't propose to be connected with any show that ain't a good one. You come along up to my office."

He grabbed Mr. Joy by the thin arm and hustled him along. In the office he pushed his captive down into an armchair and tried to stuff a big cigar into his protesting hand.

"Smoke up, elder," he invited, and then apologized.

"But, you see," he explained, "it's second nature with me to hand a man a cigar. One hand is always out to shake and the other is feeling into my vest pocket. There's nothing narrow about me, elder. And I won't be mixed into anything that's narrow. Wide open and broad gauge—that's the motto! And that's the way I want that banquet run. What's your program?"

"I have prepared one in my humble way," said the toastmaster, fumbling in his pocket.

"Out with it!" commanded Hiram, snapping his fingers under the illuminated nose.

"I will read it to you," offered Mr. Joy, clearing his throat.

"I can do my own reading—I know how. It'll save time."

He captured the document as one would scoop a fly out of the air and appraised it hastily.



"At this merry Christmastide, it has been deemed wise to
Sproul. "These critters

"That's a helluva program!" he snapped, and then jammed his palm on his mouth. "Excuse me, elder, for the slip—but that's what it is, just the same. Starting with a guitar solo and winding up with a pome by Old Maid Briggs!"

"But the poem is entitled 'Brave Fire Hero, Save My Child,' and it's dedicated to you," pleaded Mr. Joy.

"Maybe, then, under the circumstances, we'll let that stand, if there ain't too many stanzas, and of course the fife-and-drum corps will have to tune up, so we can sing 'Here we come from old Scotaze.' But as for that essay by your daughter and this speaking-pieces business and these pennyroyal hymns—nothing doing at my show! Elder, you don't seem to have good judgment as to what makes a show."



get out of the beaten rut, dear friends here gathered. "Say, look-a-here," protested Cap'n are here to eat first of all."

Mr. Joy's general despondency took on deeper hues of gloom.

"Consider the occasion," proceeded Mr. Look, waving the paper. "It's set for Christmas. Christmas must be made merry. This program might do for a Tuesday-evening vestry meeting, but for a banquet—why, damnation, elder—" Again he checked himself by clapping palm on mouth.

"I—I think I will not undertake the duties," quavered Mr. Joy. "I have just been talking with Captain Sproul, and he strongly disapproved of all my humble plans."

"He did, did he?"

"He was very emphatic."

"Was, eh?"

"He opposes the idea of any banquet."

"Look here, elder, if that's the way he feels about you, you go ahead with the job. I won't allow you to back out. You have been billed, and we must keep faith with the public. But ginger the thing up! Slap in the cayenne! Get me?"

"I don't think I know what to provide."

"Go home and peel some of the wrappings off'm your sense of humor, elder. Think up something merry!"

"I'll allow you to suggest the details."

"I shan't do any such thing," declared Hiram with vigor. "I can't do it. It'll leak out that I did it, and then

I'll be twitted about butting in. You know what this town is! But haven't you got any sense of humor?"

"I fear not. My pursuits have been serious. And yet I have a brother who is very much of a wag. Very comical fellow, I assure you!"

"Has a sense of humor, eh?" inquired Hiram with some interest.

"Very highly developed sense—very!"

"Where does he live?"

"In West Newry."

Mr. Look scratched his nose.

"Well," he admitted, "I believe your story about him. He's got to have a sense of humor to live in that town. I'll tell you what you do, elder. Seeing that he has a sense of humor——"

To Hiram's surprise the parson began to cackle laughter.

"A wag—a comical, very comical fellow! Once he——"

"No matter about past performances, elder. It's what he can do in this case that counts. You go ask his advice about shooting ginger into a banquet. A surprise—that's the main thing. And between you and him, you can keep the thing right in the family—no gab about it to spoil the effect."

"I will confer with my brother," promised Mr. Joy. "I am glad I have had this talk with you, sir. I fear I was entertaining an entirely wrong conception of the proper exercises at a banquet."

"Seems that way to me!" agreed Hiram brusquely. "You had nothing for pep. The program you have on that paper wouldn't start a snicker or stir a ripple at an old maids' knitting bee."

"It makes me laugh in advance," teased the Reverend Joy. "I am laughing now when I think of what that waggish brother of mine will suggest. I have no idea what it will be, but it will be good!" He sucked his lips and

smacked them. "It is sure to be comical—very!"

Then Mr. Joy went home chuckling.

The next day he met Cap'n Sproul in the post office and smiled so unctuously and was so patronizingly amiable that the cap'n showed frank surprise when he surveyed this change in demeanor.

"In order to set your mind perfectly at ease and so that there may be no friction, I will state that I have obeyed your request and will not call on you for opening remarks," vouchsafed the toastmaster.

"There's no chance for an argument, seeing that I didn't intend to make any opening remarks. But you can put down on your program a speaker I have arranged for. It's a matter that ought to be brought to the attention of the voters, and they'll be clustered at that banquet like flies around the bung hole of a molasses kag. You write——"

"The program has been entirely revised, and we shall not need any further suggestions," stated the clergyman, exhibiting real gayety.

The cap'n looked the Reverend Joy over with fresh and irritated interest in this surprising change of mood.

"The occasion is now planned on a merrier and more lightsome scale—more befitting the festival season," explained Mr. Joy, suppressing a giggle. "More I cannot say just now—but after this letter"—he patted the missive he was about to mail—"brings results, we shall see—we shall see!"

"I have written a letter, too, and it has brought results." The cap'n tapped forefinger on a piece of mail he had just taken from his box. "You put down in your program that Civil Engineer Miles Watkins, of the shire town, will read a paper on 'Sewerage Systems. Gravity versus Filter Plan.'"

"I question the——"

"You needn't. I don't propose to

have that banquet a whole waste of time, effort, and grub. I may be able to get a speaker on 'Village Improvements.' If so, I'll notify you."

"I insist that a banquet where flow of soul——"

"Are you trying to tell me my business?"

"Not any more than you are telling me how to run mine," declared the clergyman resentfully. "Furthermore, I have taken counsel with the Honorable Hiram Look, and he——"

"What has he got to do with it?"

He is the chief figure in the affair."

"He's a figure, all right. But it's only a zero with the rim left off. He's having a dinner given to him. And I'm president of the organization that's giving it. You do as I tell you."

Mr. Joy turned away and dropped his letter into the receiving slot. Defiance twinkled in his little eyes.

"I am backed by Mr. Look, sir. I am toastmaster with full powers. And I furthermore suggest that you treat a minister of the gospel with more respect." He went away.

"Condemn this fighting a parson!" growled the cap'n. "It can't be done shipshape. But I know how to talk to Hime Look, who is torching him on."

Mr. Look was in his office, his feet on the table, his plug hat on the side of his head, and the holiday spirit surrounding him like an aura.

"I'm not running it," he said airily, breaking in on the cap'n's protests.

"But it's pretty plain that you're running that parson. As president of the board of trade, I don't propose to have a business men's serious banquet turned into a circus performance."

"Who said it would be?"

"If he takes any of your advice, it will be."

"Let's see!" drawled Hiram. "Did you O. K. that first program of his? Mebbe you drew it up and I'm stepping on your tender feelings."

The cap'n shifted his glowering gaze and was a bit disconcerted.

"There's a middling ground between tomrot and hoorah-ste-boy, Mr. Look. That elder says you're behind him. And when he grins like a Chessy cat in my face and talks about making Christmas merry, I propose to find out what he's planning. Outside of preaching, I don't believe he has any more judgment than a jack rabbit has doing sums in algebr'y."

"Mebbe not," agreed Hiram with serenity. "But as the guest of honor, who is to be entertained, I'll be responsible for all that's done to entertain me. Remember that! I'll be responsible."

"Of all the cussed cheek I ever saw shown by a guest——"

"If I were bashful, I'd mebbe make believe to be tickled to death with that guitar solo, to be followed by a tating contest between picked teams of old maids and widders. But"—Mr. Look blew a big cloud of smoke into the air and squinted through the haze at the cap'n—"seein' that I am invited to enjoy a proud moment in my life, I propose to make sure that the moment is made a merry one for me and all concerned. That toastmaster that was picked for me was a dead one till I gave him a little touch of gad. Now he is prancing. You needn't worry. He is all right and I am behind him, I say."

The next day the Reverend Ancillus Joy presented himself to Hiram with lightsome air that promised much.

"My brother, Henshaw, has thrown himself into the project heartily—very heartily, I assure you. A most comical fellow he is, too. I have bethought myself of one of his anecdotes, and I will relate it to show you what a thorough wag he is. There was a——"

"There probably was, elder. But I have heard every story in the world except one, and that wasn't fit for a decent gent like me to listen to, and of course an elder like you wouldn't be

telling me that one. So let's not waste time. What's his program?"

"He has not confided it to me. He merely writes that he will attend to all details and that we should be prepared to laugh very heartily indeed. I have been laughing in anticipation ever since I received his letter," said Mr. Joy, indulging in gleeful cackle.

"Well, you've got more sense of humor than I gave you credit for," stated Mr. Look sourly. "I can laugh when I see anything to laugh at, but this doing all your snickering up a few days ahead is a little out of my reckoning. Don't you have the least notion about what your brother proposes to ring in on us?"

"Not the least. But it will be immensely ludicrous, excruciatingly so."

"What may be a scream in West Newry may be a frost in Scotaze," demurred Hiram, his gloom increasing.

"Real humor has its upiversal appeal," insisted the clergyman. "You can depend on my brother—a wag of parts."

"Say, elder, there's another man you can depend on, too. You can depend on Cap Sproul to put the dingbosh onto that whole affair if he ain't headed off at the grand entry. You and your brother have got to open the show and work fast. He has something on his mind that he intends to dump onto us."

"Speeches on sewerage and village improvement," snarled Mr. Joy. "He told me he had invited a civil engineer and—"

"My Gawd!" wailed Mr. Look. "That will be making Christmas cussed merry!"

"I may state that I questioned the propriety of such action with much firmness—with some resentment, if a minister of the gospel—"

"You're toastmaster—you're the boss at that feed—you ought to have damned his infernal impudence up hill and down dale. Look here, elder, this is a des-

perate case, and I don't propose to fall down. What if your brother doesn't produce goods that will catch the crowd? Then Sproul will trot on one of them monologue acts, and we won't be able to shut it off without starting a riot. I'll tell you what I think I'll do so as to stall till your brother can make good with his act! I'll have a couple of the boys—board of trade versus Ancients—stage a six-round go with the gloves, and we'll—"

"A prize fight?" gasped the Reverend Joy.

"Prize fight your grandmother's eyewinker, elder! Scientific boxing—a sport as clean as a hound's tooth!"

"I protest—I cannot sanction such a performance by my presence."

"You don't call a little exhibition of manly defense wicked, do you?"

"It's unseemly, sir."

"Say, elder, if you talk that way, I'll begin to distrust the whole Joy family. Your brother will be giving us a pie-eating contest and a rope pull between your Sunday-school classes and consider he's making Christmas merry. I say, cuss the judgment of those who picked an elder for ringmaster!"

"I did not solicit the honor that has been bestowed on me," returned the clergyman with dignity. "But I won't be shoved aside at this late hour. I have my dignity to consider. I will not allow any prize fights. And, furthermore, I will not permit my brother to be turned down after he has interested himself and has gone to considerable trouble."

Hiram was somewhat cowed by Mr. Joy's rebuking gaze.

"Well," he admitted, "under the circumstances, I reckon we have got to let the thing whicker and trust in the Lord. But I'll tell you this, elder: It ain't wicked to get your blow in first and then keep blowing. You tell your brother that it's up to him and that, on the day after a Merry Christmas



A truly remarkable object entered, escorted by four men who were grotesquely dressed.

that hasn't been made merry, I ain't at all pleasant to be thrown amongst!"

"In the excitement of the discussion, I have almost forgotten a request from my brother," stated the clergyman, who had lost most of his joviality. "Fearing that you may not be a ready speechmaker when on your feet, he——"

"Me not a ready speechmaker—after barking thirty years in front of Look's Leviathan Circus! Good gad, man, your brother must have led a monastic life there in West Newry!"

"If you are a ready speechmaker, so much the better. You are to receive a gift—a very notable gift, sir. My

brother will present it. A word to the wise, and so forth!"

Hiram winked.

"Let me at 'em, elder! Let me at 'em! That's just the play I'm looking for. After I get done, they won't any more listen to Cap Sproul's talent than they'd sit down and pay attention to katydids! Good stuff! I reckon that brother of yours knows his card!"

"I have assured you that he is ever ready with waggish drollery," affirmed Mr. Joy, softening. "I am sure that the risibilities of all will be deeply stirred."

"Merry's the word, elder, merry's the

word," agreed the guest of honor, slapping the shrinking shoulder as the clergyman took his leave. "I'm a natural talker, but I'll sit right down and make a few headings for a speech that Dan'el Webster wouldn't be ashamed of in his palmiest days."

Until the night of* the advertised event there were no further conferences between the principals concerned in the proposed Christmas festivities; Mr. Joy was preserving his brother's secret, Cap'n Sproul was sourly mum, Hiram Look was trusting still in the Lord and making occasional additions to his "headings" with stubby lead pencil, gazing at the ceiling with the abstraction of a poet seeking rhymes.

"You needn't worry any about my part in the show," he informed the Reverend Joy, when they met at the door of the town hall, joining the throng of fellow townsmen. "I'm ready to grab in when the word is given."

Reverend Mr. Joy marched into the hall and took his allotted place at the head table. On his right was Hiram Look, guest of honor; on his left was Cap'n Sproul, president of the board of trade. It was an event that called out the men of Scotaze in full force—and the galleries were filled with admiring women who had flocked to gaze down on their banqueting heroes.

Cap'n Sproul was evidently proceeding strictly according to the schedule he had promulgated. When all were assembled about the tables, he pounded vigorously with his knife handle and bawled in master mariner's tones:

"Sit down!"

But the Reverend Joy did not sit down. He remained standing and began to speak as soon as the clatter of chairs had ceased.

"Citizens—ladies and gentlemen here assembled!"

"Good work! Get in first blow and keep blowing!" averred Hiram in muffled tones at his right elbow.

But at his left elbow, Cap'n Sproul growled indignantly:

"Look here! You ain't due to speak till you're introduced as the toastmaster."

"I don't need any introduction to the people of this fair town." Mr. Joy smiled placidly and went on:

"At this merry Christmastide, it has been deemed wise to get out of the beaten rut, dear friends here gathered. Our dinners in past times have been too formal. If a hearty laugh aids digestion, so can a hearty laugh serve as beneficial prelude to a dinner. So we will have that laugh first of all, and then fall to upon the viands upon which blessing will be asked. I wish Merry Christmas to all. I go farther than that and assure you that the next few moments will be made merry for you."

"Say, look-a-here," protested Cap'n Sproul. "These critters are here to eat first of all."

"In behalf of the Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association, I resent any such talk as that," said Foreman Look. "We haven't come here to play wolves. And we're too polite to break in on an elder."

That stirred a good round of applause, and men who had unfolded napkins stealthily refolded them and put them back on the tables.

The Reverend Joy smiled upon his listeners and noted that curiosity was replacing the eagerness of hunger.

"There are many things ahead designed to furnish rare mirth and merriment, but first of all it is meet and right that we should select and pay honor to the central figure in this royal feast. I call upon the high priest of Momus to enter and pay court to that central figure."

Entering from the outer darkness through the big, broad door of the town hall, came a personage wearing a comical mask with a bulbous nose and

sheathed in a robe to which were attached other comic masks.

"It's my brother, Henshaw," confided Mr. Joy to the guest of honor. "I want you to know it so that you may enjoy his humor to the utmost. I presume you understand now why I have been extolling his rare waggishness."

"Oyez—oyez—o'ez!" shouted the new arrival.

"Delicious, eh?" asked Mr. Joy, trying to suppress his laughter.

"To tell the truth, elder, I used to have so much trouble trying to manage rum-hound clowns in my circus, I've sort of taken a dislike to anything that looks like a clown. Is this the show?"

"Be patient—be patient!" chided the toastmaster.

The priest of Momus danced up the hall, along the aisle between the tables, and halted, striking a pose. He chanted:

"I come from Momus, all so gay,
To greet you on this Christmas Day.
I've brought to one of Momus' own
This present of a royal throne."

He skipped back down the hall and called into the darkness outside the door.

A truly remarkable object entered, escorted by four men who were grotesquely dressed. It was wholly impossible to come at much of an idea of the identity of the object. It seemed to be a huge, square canvas box that moved along of its own accord. The priest of Momus steered it, walking ahead and holding to a sort of towline that entered through the canvas. The four attendants marched at the four corners.

The box slid along between rows of gaping bystanders until it arrived at the head table and it halted when the leader called: "Whoa!"

"Here we are with the animated throne, straight from the high court of King Momus. When mortals are honored above their fellows, it is right and

due that they should be elevated—should receive something worthy of their estate. This town is here in festal array to honor its brave fire chief, Hiram Look. Will the Honorable Look please arise and step forward?"

Hiram hesitated a moment, but obeyed a nudge from the toastmaster.

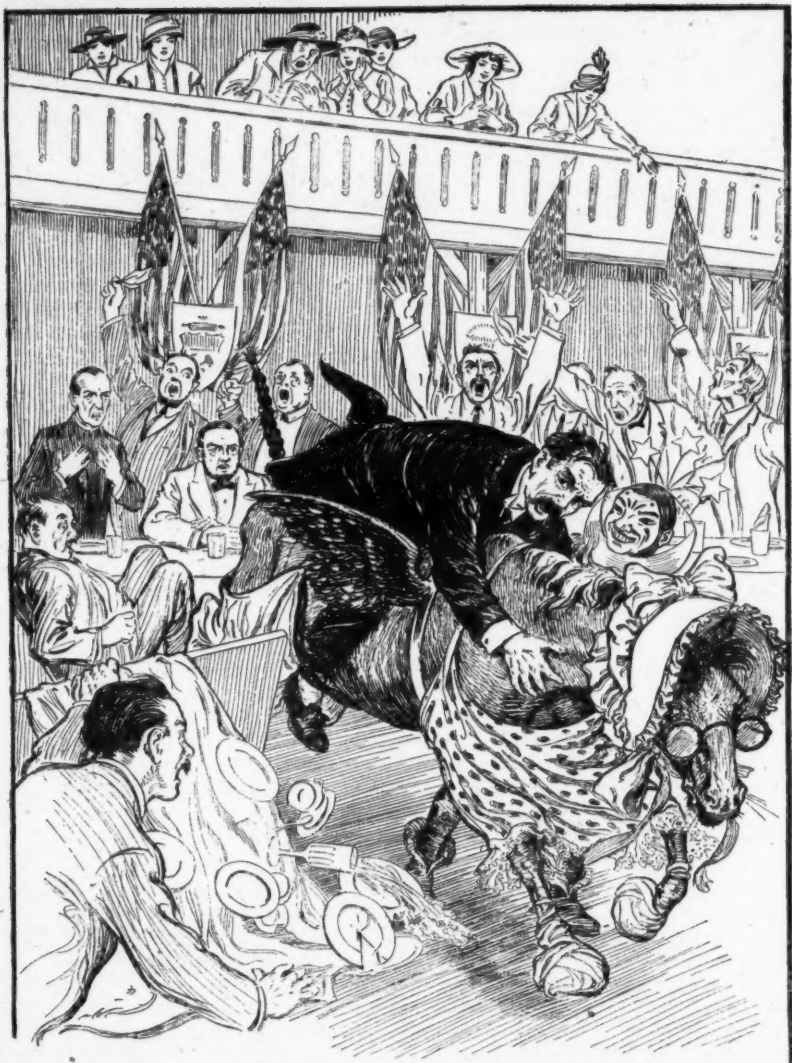
"Gold and silver and carved wood might be well for the bloated king who mounts upon a throne. But such is not a throne for a brave man who must dash forth at the head of his men to fight the fire god," declaimed the stranger, through the hole in his comic mask. "He must go as on the wings of the wind. He must go as conquerors go. So I bring here to the Honorable Look a four-legged throne on which to go forth. He will snuff the battle from afar off and snort, 'Ha! Ha!' Ladies and gentlemen and Honorable Look, you will now be allowed to feast your eyes on a descendant of one of the steeds of Nimshi who drove furiously. We will unveil your throne—Chief Look—and he is named Sawhorse, by Carpenter Boy, dammed by Hemlock Maid. He eats spiral oats, a cross between sawdust and bed springs, and when those oats are digesting, they uncoil and enable him to leap forty feet at every jump. So ride you forth at the head of your brave men! Aids, do your duty!"

Two of the men seized the canopy and lifted it off.

So amazing was the spectacle revealed that Cap'n Sproul, who had risen to protest at any more of that tomfoolery, sat down and stared with the others.

It was a horse, an ancient wreck with ribs showing like slats, but so bedizened and bedecked that at first it was almost unrecognizable as a horse.

An immense poke bonnet was on its head—a bonnet prodigiously trimmed with tulle and ribbons. The forelegs were swathed in petticoats edged with



Crash of dishes, smash of tables, howls of men, and screams of women served as obligato for Chief Look's masterful profanity.

lace, and blue drilling overalls incased the hind legs and were strapped over the horse's back. Outspread turkey

wings were attached to the foreshoulders, and the horse's tail was braided into a network of wire and stuck

straight up. Wrappings as big as pumpkins muffled the four feet. Big blue goggles covered the eyes. Furthermore, the animal was a "breather," betraying that infirmity by sibilant whistlings from its nose.

"We have here," explained the humorist from West Newry, "the noble steed who will take our hero into the fight with the devouring element. Note the symbols of dress—tenderness as of woman to the fore; behind is the rugged strength of man; wings to denote the haste with which said hero will hasten to the rescue of all who are in distress. From this throne it is fitting that he should express to the assembled multitude his resolve to be ever at the head. Aids, to your duty!"

Two attendants rushed to Chief Look and lifted him with plain intent to set him on the back of the beast.

"Not by a damn sight!" roared the guest of honor.

But two more attendants assisted and boosted Hiram to his perch.

"It's all innocent amusement—a surprise—a merry moment," admonished the master of ceremonies, holding to one of Chief Look's struggling legs.

"It'll be merry Tophet here in about two seconds if you don't let me off'm this damnation bone heap!" announced Mr. Look ferociously.

"Carry out the humor of the occasion—address the guests from your charger," pleaded Toastmaster Joy. "It's all in the way of the surprise we had planned."

Cap'n Sproul folded his arms and sat back. An expression of grim relish settled upon his features.

Events had been moving so suddenly and in such amazing fashion that the other guests merely stared, without protest by word or movement.

"You are spoiling the whole occasion. Haven't you any sense of humor?" demanded the priest of Momus, hanging to Hiram's leg.

"If you call this humor, you have overtrained," replied Mr. Look with venom. The horse was beginning a queer sort of shuffle around in a circle on its muffled feet. "Hold this jeerously giraffe still!"

"The whole effect of the thing will be spoiled unless you make your speech from horseback," insisted the promoter from West Newry. "By gracious, seeing that you have asked for something original, you shall do it, too!" He slipped the halter from the horse's head and tossed it to his men. "Fasten his legs," he commanded, and the halter rope was slid under the animal's belly instantly and made fast to Chief Look's feet.

"Where's your enthusiasm, gents?" demanded the manager of the show. "Here's your chief on horseback, ready to respond to the call of duty. What have you to say to him?"

"I call for three cheers for Foreman Hiram Look," bawled a voice.

All came to their feet instinctively. They swung their arms. At the first concerted bellow, the old horse crouched in panic on its spraddled legs. At the second howl, it spun in circles, seeking avenue of escape, and the wag from West Newry clutched in vain for ear or the strings of the bonnet. When the third cheer volleyed on the air, the horse flung the goggles away by a slat of its head. It saw the open door. When "Tiger!" sounded in a crescendo of clamor, the affrighted old pelter leaped through the fringe of men, who had come running, and started for the door, zigzagging down the hall, knocking over tables and men with its huge knobs of feet.

Foreman Look was lying on the horse's back between the turkey wings, clinging with both arms to the animal's neck. Crash of dishes, smash of tables, howls of men, and screams of women served as obligato for Chief Look's masterful profanity, but, in

spite of his appeals and his commands, the horse knocked down all those whom it did not elude and sped into the night through the big door.

It faded into the gloom like a fugitive spirit, its feet making no sound on the hard ground. After a few brief moments the voice of Chief Look died in the distance.

"Where in blazes does that hoss belong, you infernal kadink, you, whoever you are?" demanded one of the Ancients, shaking his fist under the bulbous nose of the mask.

"West Newry," faltered the humorist.

"What are you trying to do to our chief?"

"It's—it's something he asked for. He——"

"You're a devilish liar!"

"I assure you and this gathering that Honorable Look and I planned this whole affair," insisted the reverend toastmaster. "He desired to have Christmas made merry for all concerned. He——"

"I'm too polite to say that I'm hearing an elder back up a liar," stated the spokesman for the Ancients. "And whatever may be my thoughts on the matter, I'll keep 'em to myself. But see here, men, we've got to organize a posse to ketch that raving wild animal. Our chief is off, going hellwhoop for some place, and if anybody else dares to tell me that he's doing it to make Christmas merry, I'll stay back long enough to lick that same liar."

He glared about on the assemblage and no one spoke.

"Very well," said he. "Now come on, Ancients!"

Men rose and rushed out of the hall.

"You'd better join that excursion party to West Newry. They seem to be headed that way," Cap'n Sproul advised the priest of Mornus. "And you will do well to keep on your mask. As

soon as them Ancients have a little spare time on their hands, they may want to give you a ride of your own! They're generous that way!"

The cap'n pounded on the table with the handle of his knife until he had quieted the general confusion.

"Now that the Merry Christmas part of this banquet is over," he announced, "and the merry part of the audience has gone away to frolic and enjoy a starry night for a ramble, them that's present will please take their setting at the tables which haven't been tipped upside down and we will proceed to eat the vittles provided. And then——"

The Reverend Joy was tugging at his sleeve.

"I desire to make a public announcement and explanation," he stated.

"You won't be called on in the exercises following," said the cap'n. "I shall announce that, being an elder, the language of the Hon'erable Look has made you sick and you couldn't stay for the banquet. There goes your brother. Understand?"

Reverend Joy quailed under the cap'n's flaming eye. He rose and tip-toed out.

"As I said," continued Cap'n Sproul, "we will eat the vittles provided. And seeing that it has developed into mostly a business men's meeting, we will then listen to an address or so on village improvements and et cetera. If any of the ladies in the gallery can sing and play, we'll be obliged if they'll come to the pianner and entertain us."

When the music had been started by blushing and willing volunteers, Cap'n Sproul sank into his chair and waited for his soup with bland amiability.

"Seems like this was going to develop into quite a merry Christmas," he declared. "I'm sorry that the Hon'erable Look felt obliged to hurry away so soon after his Christmas present had been given to him."



ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

Elizabeth Ann is back again. It wasn't her fault that two Christmas gifts got mixed, but the awful error caused a good deal of consternation and unexpected happiness.

KATHLEEN'S crying again," Elizabeth Ann reported, coming into the room where her mother and Mrs. Bailey were having tea together in front of the fireplace:

Mrs. Gale, who, with just the correct amount of deference to Mrs. Bailey's opinion, was putting the final touches to the Junior Day program for New Year's afternoon, was not exactly pleased with the interruption. It was not that she was unsympathetic, but it was, after all, impossible to disassociate Kathleen with the unusually large ironing and the best four-yard tablecloth and the monogrammed napkins that had to be done up for the Christmas dinner. Neither did it seem just the thing to have Elizabeth Ann thus unearth the domestic troubles in the laundry and publish them immediately before guests in the living room.

Of course, with Mrs. Bailey it was different, in a way. Kathleen was Mrs. Bailey's particular protégée, and it was for this reason that she had been ironing lately for Mrs. Gale. Indeed, Mrs.

Bailey, with a little motherly murmur of sympathy, set her cup and plate on the tea table and turned to Mrs. Gale.

"You won't mind if I run down to see her for a moment, will you, my dear? Christmas is going to be so hard for her."

Oh, no, certainly not; Mrs. Gale wouldn't mind at all. But after her guest had left the room, she sat watching the fire with a rather troubled face, wondering if it would have looked better had she risen as quickly and gone down to Kathleen herself.

"What's the matter with her now?" she asked Elizabeth Ann.

"She's crying about her mother again. She was telling me about Christmas two years ago, and how her mother baked little cakes——"

"How much ironing has she done? Has she finished the big cloth yet?"

"Yes, and seven of the napkins and some waists. She says she just loves to iron your table linen; it's so pretty. And she's ironing it so hard and bringing out the pattern so plain."



"What a dear old lady! How sweet she looks with her hands all folded so quietly, doesn't she, mother?"

"She irons well," Mrs. Gale conceded, somewhat mollified. "Elizabeth Ann, I wish you'd run over to the store and get some more white tissue paper and some gold cord. I want you to help tie up the presents when Mrs. Bailey goes. Things are piling up fast."

Having thus disposed of her small daughter, whose entrance had caused the rather untimely interruption, Mrs. Gale settled herself, with as great an effort at relaxation as she could summon on the day before Christmas, to await Mrs. Bailey's return. After all, she

told herself, it was pleasant that Mrs. Bailey felt enough at home to go down into her laundry. They were growing to be very good friends, as well as neighbors, and Mrs. Gale could not but foresee that the intimacy would mean for herself a certain prestige in the Woman's Club during Mrs. Bailey's approaching reign as president.

Elizabeth Ann joyfully bundled herself into her coat and hat and set out for the store. Things were growing more Christmasy every instant, working up to that dear old day when a little girl could turn her heart loose among the holly wreaths and the plum pudding and the new presents all about and all the people she loved and the Christmas carols, without

being reproved for anything. Elizabeth Ann's sentiment was almost constantly, she felt, being sat upon by some one. To-morrow she determined to revel in all the extravagances of speech and kisses and hugs that she chose.

Turning the corner suddenly, she ran into Herb Ellsworth, who was out "hooking on" with his sled.

"Hello!" he greeted her.

"Hello! Grandma's coming to-night. I could just eat her up!"

Elizabeth Ann, caught thinking of

her love for every one in the world, had very rosy cheeks under her red hat, and her eyes were starry and blue. Herb, approving these symptoms, did not seem to mind the hyperbole noticeable in her speech.

"My Uncle John's coming in the morning. I hope he brings me a new sled," he offered in his turn. "Hey! Which way yuh going, mister?"

Herb was off.

"Good-by, Elizabeth Ann."

She waved to him happily, understanding the necessity for his abrupt departure and not being offended by it in the least, for she was fond of "hooking on" herself.

With her tissue paper and cord, she came home to a pleasing confusion of presents spread out upon the dining-room table, each waiting to be tied up and marked with its "Merry Christmas" card—presents in gay, holiday boxes; soft, fluffy things crocheted from yarn; towels that Mrs. Gale had embroidered; books; a train of cars to run around on a track—this for Elizabeth Ann's small brother, Donald—a few stray dolls for some little nieces; a picture or two—

"Who's this for?" Elizabeth Ann asked her mother, who had just come downstairs with another armful of gifts. "What a dear old lady!"

"What, dear? That picture? Oh, that's for Mrs. Bailey. She admired it so one day when we were passing an art-store window."

"What a dear old lady!" repeated Elizabeth Ann. "How sweet she looks with her hands all folded so quietly, doesn't she, mother? Something like grandma—or Kathleen's mother. I wonder who she was, don't you?"

"Why, Elizabeth Ann! You surely know that picture! I thought you learned things like that at school. It's Whistler's portrait of his mother. Here! Let's have the tissue paper.

And please bring my fountain pen from the desk, will you, dearie?"

"I knew it must be somebody's mother; she looks so motherly," Elizabeth Ann commented from the living room, opening her mother's little mahogany desk. She came back into the dining room with a bright idea. "Couldn't I take it down to show Kathleen? She'd just love it."

"Oh, I wouldn't now, I don't believe. I'm in a hurry to wrap these up, Elizabeth Ann, and I want you to take a few of them around to the neighbors for me. It's no use keeping Kathleen all stirred up, anyhow."

She wrote: "With Merry Christmas wishes from Alice Gale," on a white card under the delicate design of gold candles and mistletoe, wrapped the little picture with tissue paper and gold cord, and fastened the card upon it.

"Now the towels for the Preston girls. You can wrap those, while I write the cards. And that baby jacket is for Mrs. Browning. You can lay it in one of the boxes if you want to, so the embroidery will show better. Be sure to remember, now, which is which."

"I will," promised Elizabeth Ann importantly. "But it is too bad about Kathleen's mother, isn't it?" she pursued. "Just think! Kathleen and her brother had worked and saved so hard for two whole years to send for her from the old country, and just as they got enough money, the war broke out and the boats stopped running—or something—or got mixed up—or it wasn't safe—I forget just what—and she couldn't come. And they've been waiting for a chance so she could get— Mother, are you listening?"

"Yes, dear," replied Mrs. Gale absently, writing her cards. "Which was for Elinor Preston? This one?"

"—so she could come across the ocean to America to them. And then

last week they had this letter—from the priest it was, Kathleen said—telling them that their mother had died and was buried.”

“Yes,” murmured Mrs. Gale. “It was too bad.”

“Just think if it had been grandma! Or you, mother! Wouldn’t it have been awful if it had been *you*? I—I don’t believe I could stand it, mother! Waiting and waiting and then——”

Elizabeth Ann’s imagination was too much for her. She burst into tears, and Mrs. Gale must stop writing long enough to take a little girl upon her lap and comfort her.

“Now, Elizabeth Ann!”

“Yes, but if you could see where Kathleen lives!” sobbed Elizabeth Ann.

“I know——”

“In that horrid little row of brick houses that they call ‘Fort Sumter.’ They’re so ugly and such poor people live there! And such dirty babies! Kathleen says she gets so homesick, and so does Tom—that’s her brother—and they’ve just been waiting and holding on till their mother could come and then—— Oh, dear!”

With much effort, Elizabeth Ann was finally quieted down to a more subdued grief and could resume her task of wrapping parcels with only occasional sniffs now and then to remind one of the recent storm.

“What are we going to give her?” she sniffed once.

“Who?”

“Kathleen?”

“Why—why—I hadn’t intended to give her anything, really. She’s only ironed for me two or three times and may not be permanent at that.”

Mrs. Gale’s forehead wrinkled irritably.

“Goodness, Elizabeth Ann! I wish you wouldn’t keep talking about her all the time! Besides, we’ve spent more for Christmas now than your father approves of. It’s a towel here—and

linen ’way up this year, too—and a picture there, and presents for all your friends, and now for some of Donald’s, even, and Callie, of course—she’s been with us so long—and goodness knows! I don’t see why we are obliged to give Kathleen anything at all. We’ve given her the work. That ought to be enough.”

“Didn’t that picture cost a lot that you gave Mrs. Bailey?” Elizabeth Ann asked, trying to be helpful. “Did you have to pay so much for that? Isn’t it a hand-carved frame like the one father framed your picture and Donald’s in?”

“Well—of course! For Mrs. Bailey! Oh, very well! Have it your own way, child. Goodness me, though! What shall we give her? Something substantial that she can use. I know—run over to the store again, Elizabeth Ann, and get a half-pound can of tea. The Irish always like tea—and— Yes, those tin cans. You know the kind—I can’t think of the name this minute. She said she liked it, I remember. Ask Callie what kind we get. Hurry, dear.”

Not altogether pleased, but accepting this compromise, even, Elizabeth Ann returned presently from another trip to the store with the can of tea and a fresh inspiration.

“Let’s wrap it up just the same, mother, in tissue paper and gold cord, and you write a card for it. It looks so much more Christmasy.”

“Well—— No, not one of those cards. Give me one of those little ones, then, with the poinsettia on it and the string tied—— In the package there. That’s it! All right. ‘Merry Christmas from Mrs. Gale and Elizabeth Ann.’ How’s that?”

“Oh, fine! Now shall I run down and give it to her?”

But Kathleen had gone. It was after five o’clock, and only the neat laundry, with its rack of freshly ironed clothes and the basket half filled with those she had left sprinkled for Callie to fin-



And so they rode behind the "Star"
grocery wagon down to the
Prestons' big house.

ish, remained to tell the tale of the little Irish girl who had cried her heart out down there that day over her forlorn and motherless Christmas.

"Well, you can take it over to her when you carry these others around for me," Mrs. Gale decided. Then, rather uncertainly, "I wonder if it's too dark, though, for you to go over there. I don't mind having you out on Harrison Avenue, but——"

They went to the door and looked out into the gathering dusk of Christ-

mas Eve. A light snow had begun to sift down from the gray clouds, and along Harrison Avenue gay yellow light streamed out through Christmas wreaths in windows, making the fluffy air almost as bright as day. But over on Aberdeen Street——

"I don't know, Elizabeth Ann——"

And just then Herb Ellsworth turned into the walk with his Christmas present for Elizabeth Ann. He presented it awkwardly, for he had planned to ring the doorbell and leave it on the

doorstep as he had once successfully left some Valentine violets, and finding Elizabeth Ann and her mother in the doorway upset his calculations. He stammered madly and held it forward with a stiff right arm—a long, flat package with a hump in the middle of it that rattled. It certainly whetted a little girl's curiosity.

"You—you daresent open it till tomorrow, though. Not till Christmas."

"Why, thank you, Herbert. How thoughtful of you to remember Elizabeth Ann!"

It was Mrs. Gale who came to the rescue, along with Elizabeth Ann's father incoherent thanks.

"And, Herbert, are you in a hurry?"

No'm, he wasn't.

"Could you—would you walk over with Elizabeth Ann while she delivers a present for me on Aberdeen Street?"

Why, sure, Herbert both could and would. He alternated his feet eagerly, shuffling them about in the soft snow.

And so it came about that Herb and Elizabeth Ann set out to deliver Mrs. Gale's Christmas gifts to the Harrison Avenue neighbors—and to Irish Kathleen on Aberdeen Street.

It probably was Herb's idea that they "hook on" as they went. There were plenty of vehicles to choose from, indeed, going all ways, and every one willing enough, on Christmas Eve, to give free rides to the clusters of happy children who stood on nearly every corner, shouting:

"Hey? Which way yuh going? Take us on?"

But if Herb proposed it and offered half his sled for Elizabeth Ann to ride upon, at least she agreed readily to the alluring proposition. And so they rode behind the "Star" grocery wagon down to the Prestons' big colonial house, carrying there the two towels for the daughters whose engagements had recently been announced; then hooked on behind Doctor Courtney's cutter—along

with half a dozen other youngsters—and found their way back behind a caterer's automobile to Harrison Avenue again.

At the beginning of their rides, Elizabeth Ann found that, sitting behind, it was all she could do to "hang on," let alone hold any presents, and so Herb gallantly offered to manage the presents himself, besides holding his sled rope; which kept him rather busy, to be sure, but satisfactorily important. And finally there were only two packages left—the picture for Mrs. Bailey and the can of tea for Kathleen—and he hadn't dropped a single parcel!

It was rather hard, on Harrison Avenue, to find a vehicle that was seeking, like themselves, Aberdeen Street, but finally, by devious ways, with several stops, waits, and changes at sundry corners, they made their way over to "Fort Sumter."

"Which one goes here?" asked Herb.

"The square one," Elizabeth Ann replied, her heart aching again for poor Kathleen, who had to spend Christmas Eve in that dark, awful row of houses.

The street was dark, and the hallway into which Herb stumbled on a bare, uneven floor, was lit only by a very dim gas flicker up somewhere on a landing. But Herb, by dint of much pounding and loud inquiries in the dark of various bulky men and ungracious women who shambled to the door to answer, with half-frightened, half-expectant children huddled behind, at length found Kathleen's door, delivered the square package into her eager, astonished hands, wished her a big, hearty, boyish "Merry Christmas," and emerged again upon the street, just in time to catch a ride on a noisy express wagon rattling, full of Christmas boxes, back over to Harrison Avenue.

"The last one here?" asked Herb, as he let the rope go in front of Mrs. Bailey's house and the wagon rolled on without them.

"Yes," sighed Elizabeth Ann, wishing there were more to deliver and enjoying the slow, sliding stop in the fresh snow.

But there was plenty to look forward to at home. Grandma would be coming soon, the stockings were to be hung, the tree decorated; and so she was reconciled, after all, when the door shut upon Mrs. Bailey's white-capped maid and Herb came down the steps to take her home to her mother and receive that grateful lady's warm thanks.

Elizabeth Ann awoke, Christmas morning, with a confused memory of Christmas joys, past, present, and to come. The night before—Christmas Eve—the rides on Herb's sled in the snow, Kathleen, grandma's arrival in the big taxi with the wreaths in the windows and Elizabeth Ann's father carrying her dear, old, rather rusty traveling bag.

She would go in to see grandma this minute! Which she did, looking very much like a Christmas angel in her long white nightie, and woke that weary old lady out of a delicious sleep with a bounce onto her bed, a "Merry Christmas" shouted into her startled ear, and a kiss that satisfied even Elizabeth Ann's idea of Christmas kisses.

It was a wonderful, wonderful day, and she fulfilled to the limit her determination regarding the extravagances of love and holiday spirit that she proposed to enjoy. She convulsed the family by producing from the Christmas tree, when the presents were distributed, gifts for each one from her beloved cat, Socrates. Socrates presented them himself, much under protest, with Elizabeth Ann's assistance—a toy balloon for father, a climbing monkey for mother, for grandma a package of catnip to give to a cat that belonged to a neighbor of hers (only Socrates broke it open later himself, and scattered it broadcast over all the house) and a candy mouse for Donald.

Mr. Gale smothered his mirth with manful effort, and Mrs. Gale forced herself to overlook the growing confusion of evergreen needles and catnip and tissue paper and boxes and red and green ribbons and tin horns and drums and piles of presents and rows of presents and chairsful of presents that must be cleared away into some semblance of order before the relatives began to arrive for the big family dinner. And out in the kitchen—

"Now, never you mind, never you mind!" grandma broke in soothingly, understanding, with an old housekeeper's sure instinct as to the cause of the pucker in her daughter's forehead and her frequent uneasy sniffs at the air when the faint odor of roast goose began to be detected. "Christmas comes only once a year, and no one's going to be fussy to-day. Elizabeth Ann, you come help grandma gather up these ribbons and wind them on a spool ready for next Christmas."

But when, in the midst of things, Callie did really appear in the doorway, Mrs. Gale's heart sank. What had been forgotten in those multitudinous orders from the grocery? Lettuce for the salad? Raisin clusters for the mixed nuts?

"Kathleen, Mis' Gale," purred Callie, still—thank Heaven!—in holiday spirits.

Indeed it was Kathleen! She was standing close behind Callie, and as soon as that portly form heaved itself out of the doorway, Kathleen appeared instead, slim and girlish, her hands raised in a kind of clasped ecstasy over her breast and tears standing in her round Irish-blue eyes.

She tried to speak to Mrs. Gale, but choked on the words, and so she just held out to her—from her breast, where she had been guarding it—the little portrait of Whistler's mother in its hand-carved frame!

Mrs. Gale rose abruptly, after one



Her hands raised in a kind of clasped ecstasy over her breast and tears standing in her round Irish-blue eyes.

awful look at Elizabeth Ann, and left the room, pushing Kathleen gently before her. But outside the door they could hear the girl's broken sentences, freely interspersed with sobs, thanking Mrs. Gale over and over for the "dear, swate ould lady, the saints bless her dear heart!"

"Who is she, ma'am?" begged Kathleen. "Shure, 'tis me own mither I'll be thinkin' of always when I'm lookin' at her now."

Elizabeth Ann, straining horrified ears, heard her mother explaining in a low voice that it was a portrait that a famous painter had made of his own

dear mother; heard her telling Kathleen that she was glad she liked it so well and hoped it would comfort a little her lonesome Christmas. Oh, yes, and she must be sure to take some of the Christmas nuts and candies home to her brother. Callie would give her a bag to put them in.

Mrs. Gale came back into the room, and Elizabeth Ann waited, through the explanations that followed to father and grandma, for the thunderclap to break in wrath over her head. But who could scold a little girl whose joyous face had changed in five minutes to one so woebegone?

"How did it happen?" was all Mrs. Gale asked.

"I don't know!" wailed Elizabeth Ann. "I didn't do it on purpose, mother, truly I didn't! I just told Herb which went where, and he—he—he must have mixed them up, the great, big——"

"Elizabeth Ann!"

"Well, he is!"

"Have you any idea, child, who got the tea?"

"It—it must have been Mrs. Bailey," Elizabeth Ann faltered.

Mrs. Gale smiled, a little, weary, flickering, helpless smile, and looked up at Elizabeth Ann's father, who was regarding her teasingly through a cloud of blue smoke from his pipe.

Every one laughed—but grandma. She patted Elizabeth Ann soothingly on her bright, hanging head. She seemed to know that the clouds were hanging very heavy just then in the Christmas sky that had bidden fair to be so clear and bright, and that a little girl could not see much of a silver lining.

Yet there was a silver lining. For who could regret the happy accident that had found a comforter for Kathleen's lonely heart and touched her with a belief in Mrs. Gale's sympathy that—however mistaken it was—was far more priceless than the hand-carved frame? Surely not Elizabeth Ann! No, nor Mrs. Gale herself! She lifted the little pile of washcloths that her own mother had crocheted for her—some pink and white, some blue and white—and a blur suddenly blended all the colors into gold.

The doorbell rang sharply. Elizabeth Ann, answering, returned immediately to the living room with a brown basket full of green and white and red Christmasy foliage that Mrs. Bailey had sent over to the Gale household. A small note was tucked unobtrusively into a corner of the basket, and Mrs.

Gale did not correct Elizabeth Ann when the little girl, very improperly to be sure, read it over her mother's shoulder:

You dear, unique lady! How delightful of you to send me the little box of tea, so reminiscent of our little teacup parties together and of the friendship that has grown so sweet to me! And from Elizabeth Ann, too! She must come over with you often to join us, and I will make her a little cup of "cambric tea" all her own. Kathleen has just left, after stopping to show me, with eyes like Christmas stars, her wonderful picture. There is no need to wish you a happy day with such a Christmas heart as yours, dear lady. Lovingly,
LUCY BAILEY.

Mrs. Gale, her cheeks flaming, shook her head pleadingly at her husband, who had held out his hand for the note.

"Some other time," she murmured.

Was it possible—the color grew hotter in her cheeks—was it possible that, except for the little gift of the tea, Mrs. Bailey would not have sent her anything? She remembered suddenly that Mrs. Bailey had not talked much of Christmas gifts except as they concerned her very long list of Kathleen's and Toms and Slovenskis and Vivianos.

But Elizabeth Ann was happy again. She saw that mother was satisfied, she knew that Kathleen was comforted, and she was positive that she was the happiest little girl who ever kissed a dear grandmother and a small brother and set forth to take a walk on Christmas morning with an adored father.

"Don't be late," warned Mrs. Gale. "Dinner's at two, you know."

"We'll be there," sang out Elizabeth Ann's father, twirling his new walking stick.

And Elizabeth Ann felt that, so escorted, it was quite her lucky luck to meet the reprehensible Herb, who had caused all the mischief, just a block up Harrison Avenue, trying out a new sled.

"Herb Ellsworth!" called Elizabeth Ann.

Herb grinned, expecting—and most naturally—a flow of thanks for his Christmas present.

"Do you know what you did?" went on Elizabeth Ann. "You mixed my mother's presents all up last night. You gave Kathleen Mrs. Bailey's picture, and you gave Mrs. Bailey"—Elizabeth Ann paused for the grand climax—"a box of tea!"

"I didn't!" denied Herb hotly. "I didn't any such thing! I didn't mix them up! I asked you which one should I give Kathleen and you said, 'The square one.' Didn't you? Own up! Didn't you, now?"

Herb was hot. He was gesticulating wildly first with one fist and then with the other. Mr. Gale pulled a concealing mustache down over the corner of his mouth.

"Certainly," returned Elizabeth Ann with dignity. "The box of tea was square."

"It was *not*!" Herb triumphed, feeling that he had cornered her and cleared himself rather neatly. "The picture

was square!" The box of tea was a cube!"

"I fear," put in Mr. Gale mildly, "that the young man has you there, Elizabeth Ann."

Elizabeth Ann swallowed hard. A tear would squeeze out, though she strove to force it back.

"Gee! Don't cry——"

"It's all right," Elizabeth Ann gulped. "Nobody's mad, and Mrs. Bailey liked the tea and Kathleen loved her picture. But I'm sorry I was cross on Christmas Day. And your present was just lovely. How did you know my old parcheesi board was worn out?"

"Oh," grinned Herb, "I dunno. I bet, though, I can beat you on this one, Elizabeth Ann."

"Obvious, perhaps, but very well done," observed Mr. Gale to the white treetops, remembering certain deep-laid plans that his own boyish brain had once concocted.

"Well, good-by, Herb," Elizabeth Ann smiled, dimpling deeply. "Merry Christmas!"

A CHRISTMAS PICTURE

THE farmer is perched on his wagon.
He is tired, and his horses move slow,
For Dolly and Dobbin were harnessed
In the black, frosty morn, hours ago.
He had eggs and fresh butter to market,
And feed in a prosy brown sack,
And I wist he is taking a cargo
As dingy and dull, jogging back.

Not so—for the leaves in the hedges,
Gone to earth, show the holly's red gem;
The mistletoe, dark-hued and sturdy,
Hangs aloft at the forest's thin hem.
What's their hint? Well, the farmer is hauling
A doll—yes, and wheels, fairy size,
While a gleam just the One Day can kindle
Shines deep in his sober old eyes!

JEANNIE PENDLETON HALL.

"Peaches"

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Emperors Have Done Less," "Making Over Mark," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

A Christmas story that is different from any you ever read.

EACH tap of Miss Mary Ann MacGloin's hammer was, had there been ears intelligent enough to interpret the sound, a fervent "Damn!" But all the ears in Duffy's Railroad Men's Astoria Café, at Pine River Junction, were congenially occupied in listening to the words issuing from the lips of their owners, and there was no one to translate the accurate little blows of Miss MacGloin's tool into the rhythmic series of "Damn, damn, damn Christmas!" that would have been their literal rendering into English.

Miss MacGloin was mounted upon a stepladder, engaged in the seasonable task of tacking red and green paper garlands to the wooden top of the long mirror opposite the counter—the mirror in which the patrons of Duffy's Astoria Café caught grotesque reflections of themselves through a maze of steaming tea and coffee urns, glass-covered cake dishes, domes of sugared doughnuts, bouquets of bananas, and mounds of oranges and apples.

Below the decorator, chosen for her length of arm rather than for her Christmas ardor, Mrs. Duffy, efficient relic of the founder of the establishment, was merrily engaged in her annual bout of bargaining with the Pine River farmer who supplied the café with its holiday turkeys; and Miss Angela Hoskins, Miss MacGloin's fellow employee, was serving breakfast and badinage to two hands from the train yard opposite the restaurant, dexterously managing, with a skill born of

long practice, to pull her lovely golden little ringlets into still more provocative spirals of charm each time she glanced mirrorward.

Through the broad show window, there was a blue glitter of interweaving tracks, and beyond that the sun-smitten sheen of hard-packed country snow, all its whiteness accentuated by the dark mystery of evergreen woods, climbing mile by mile toward the mountains.

"Mary Ann," called Mrs. Duffy, as the door opened to admit a great volume of cold, tonic air and a young man, with a fur cap pulled down almost to meet a Mackinaw that violently mocked the spectrum, "climb down an' take Mr. Vail's order. Angela has stepped into the kitchen, an' if I so much as turned my back for a second on Mr. Jubb, here, there's no knowin' what kind of an ol' hen he'd pass off on me for a young milk-fed turkey."

"I don't like none to hev ye turn yer back," drawled Mr. Jubb in time-honored repartee. "I cyan't never tell what sort er Confederate money ye're slippin' in amongst the few good greenbacks ye hand me from time to time."

With never a smile for the battle of wits, Miss MacGloin dismounted from the ladder and faced the early-morning company with her usual lowering brow. She was a tall, angular woman of thirty, sallow-skinned, grim-lipped, and sullen-eyed. Her attire was quite devoid of the coquetties of Angela's; her lusterless drab hair was pulled back and screwed into a small knob with a de-

termination that suggested machinery; her black dress was unrelieved by even a brooch or a bow, and the narrow white line of ruching at the neck was obviously no concession to the instinct for adornment, but the grudging recognition of the disastrous effect of cheap black dye upon the human flesh. Her black apron was sateen, growing rusty; Angela's was silk and frilled. Her sleeves were awkwardly short and her wrists were bonily prominent to the vision of the customers to whom she happened to present food.

She advanced upon the young man whom Mrs. Duffy had designated as Mr. Vail and shoved toward him a heavy white plate, a battered-looking knife and fork, and a paper napkin. He was exchanging news with the customers whom Angela had temporarily abandoned and did not immediately raise his eyes.

"Order, please," said Mary Ann MacGloin bleakly, and he looked up.

"Why, hello, Peaches, when did you blow in?" he exclaimed cordially, and while Mary Ann's sallow skin reddened resentfully at the salutation and at the guffaw with which the other two breakfasters heard it, he continued to regard her smilingly.

"Order, please!" snapped Mary Ann MacGloin. Her teeth clicked together behind her severely held lips.

"You aren't mad just because I called you 'Peaches,' are you?" persisted the young man; his blue eyes danced in his brown face, his white teeth flashed behind his merry, well-cut lips. "Can't a fellow pay a girl a bit of a compliment when it's almost Christmas, without havin' her give him a case of chilblains by her frozen eye? 'Peaches' is a compliment—you ask Angy if it ain't. Hello, Angy! You're a pippin all right! Say, Angy, square me with Miss Peaches, here——"

"Oh, Ned! You're just the same old cut-up!" giggled Angy.

"Order, please!" Once more Mary Ann MacGloin uttered the words.

"Without so much as a 'Wish-you-a-Merry-Christmas!'" commented Mr. Vail with mock resignation. "Well, since it must be, it must, Peaches. 'Perhaps you are right to dissemble your love'"—gasps of merriment from the replete yard hands and from Angela greeted this—"but you don't have to give me cold poison to make me understand that I don't stand ace high with you. An' I'll have broiled ham an' eggs, buckwheat cakes, a cup of coffee with cream—cream, mind you, none of Mother Duffy's skim milk—an' you'd better tell them to be brownin' another set of bucks while I'm puttin' down the first. Awfully good of you, Peaches——"

But the final word was uttered to the air intervening between Mr. Vail and his reflection in the looking-glass, for Mary Ann MacGloin had disappeared through the swinging door beside the mirror into the kitchen corridor.

"Say, what museum has Ma Duffy been robbin' of its mummies?" asked Ned Vail in a voice of genuine curiosity.

And again Angela giggled and prefaced her reply with:

"Oh, Ned, ain't you awful?"

In the dark passageway to the kitchen, Mary Ann MacGloin stood for a second, her cheeks burning hotly, her eyes burning, her clenched hands burning. And when finally her lips opened, they uttered the words that the hammer had so inadequately tapped out for her.

"Damn!" said Mary Ann MacGloin. "Damn, damn, damn Christmas! And—and—him! Peaches!"

At the little V in the collar of her ugly black frock a lump swelled, and her hot eyes grew hotter for a minute with something that stung and wet them. But when she stalked into the kitchen and gave Mr. Ned Vail's ample

order, she did it with her usual tonelessness, achieving, as usual, her effect of embitterment and hostility toward all connected with it.

When she returned to the dining room with the viands, she found that the inimitable jest had already become institutionalized; three newcomers addressed her merrily as "Peaches." Angela got as far as "Peach—" and then suddenly changed her salutation to the familiar "Mary Ann;" Angela was on the same side of the counter as Miss MacGloin, and Angela's motto was "Safety first." The situation was becoming a trifle too tense when the diplomatic Mrs. Duffy decided to take a hand in affairs. She was rid of her farmer now, and she waddled comfortably across to the counter.

"Mary Ann," she said pacifically, "you'd better be the one to paste the red letters on the window—draw a curved mark for the top edges of them—'Merry Christmas to All' sort of meanderin' downward acrost the pane, an' then, on one side, the special Christmas mainyer, with the bunch of holly at the top. You've got a better

eye for spacin' than Angy. I'll take yer place behind the counter."

Mary Ann stepped gingerly onto the platform behind the plate-glass window, and threaded a cautious way among the delicacies there displayed as lures to the hungry railroad men and to the occasional traveler stranded at the Junction. But before she had herself seated with her back to the street, the tracks, and the station opposite, she caught a glimpse of a Mackinaw more variously colored than Joseph's coat, flashing among the blue, glittering steel threads.

"Damn!" said the profane Miss MacGloin, behind shut



Each tap of Miss Mary Ann McGloin's hammer was a fervent "Damn!"

teeth, as she slapped the first adhesive letter of her Yuletide message with a damp sponge. Never before had she known the relief of profanity and she reveled in it. "Damn Christmas! Damn—him! *Peaches!*"

II.

The knowledge that she was not a beauty, that she was not a person immediately pleasing to the eye or appealing to the imagination, was of old standing with Mary Ann. For a quarter of a century, she had been increasingly aware of her lack of charm. Up to the age of five, she had presumably given the matter but little thought. But at about that period in her history, she had begun to discern a difference in the way in which the Sisters at St. Catherine's treated her and some of the other little girls committed to their charge.

There were children, she had noted, who were caressed, despite the good Sisters' theory that it was never too early to deny and to discipline the earthly affections. The voluminous black serge arms had been irresistibly impelled to gather up some of their small charges; they had always been able to resist Mary Ann. And Mary Ann had hungered and thirsted to be gathered up into a Sister's arms; she had hungered and thirsted to have her bumps surreptitiously kissed, as had happened to rosy, curly Regina Schmidt—for Mary Ann had seen the kiss when Sister Mary Martha had picked Regina up from the brick walk; she had hungered and thirsted for love and all its manifestations, and she had not received them. Instead, she had received intelligent oversight, instruction, and discipline, and as a sensitive heart beat behind the checked apron that covered her thin little body, she had learned at a comparatively early age not to expose her longings to the unsympathetic regard of her mates.

It was not until she was ten that she had entirely lost the expectation of a miracle that should surround her with the palpitant warmth and cheer which she divined—how, one cannot guess—dwelt somewhere in the world for children, even homely children. But at ten, she had one day transgressed the rules of the orphanage in a particularly flagrant manner—drinking, in fact, the dregs of the homemade root beer that she had been bearing butteryward from the Sisters' refectory—and she had heard a few truths about herself that had stunned the hidden hope of her heart. At any rate Sister Mary Rose, who had uttered them, had said that they were truths, and she had furthermore averred that they were wholesome truths for Mary Ann to hear.

Sister Mary Rose, who had carried into the convent a gift for terse and vulgar expression, had put them thus:

"I don't know why I expected any better conduct of you, Mary Ann MacGloin, than deceit and thievery. I did expect something better of Ellen Lewis"—Ellen had been Mary Ann's partner in the black crime—"for she comes of decent people; she knows who her father was. But I suppose it's useless to expect anything from a child who was found in an ash barrel."

"Oh, Sister!" a voice had murmured angrily and pitifully behind the implacable Sister Mary Rose. It was Sister Maria Stella, and Mary Ann's frozen heart had thawed a little at the sound. "Oh, Sister! Don't say such a thing to a child! After all, we don't *know* about——"

"I never heard of any rule that forbade the telling of the truth," had been the harsh retort.

"The child cannot help her parentage, whatever it may have been," the kinder voice had gone on with gathering heat.

"It is salutary to keep her humble-minded," Sister Mary Rose had insisted. "It is salutary for her to realize

that by extreme piety, by constant prayer and discipline, she may, perhaps, find some favor in the eyes of Heaven for her erring mother, may possibly shorten her stay in purgatory."

"Mary Ann, you and Ellen go on with your tasks in the refectory," the kinder voice had said. And Mary Ann had learned no more salutary truths in regard to her parentage.

She had not, of course, understood what the stern Sister Mary Rose had been talking about, although ash cans were undoubtedly "low;" but the words had scorched into her little brain and later knowledge had brought interpretation of them. At the moment, she had been chiefly aware that, though the kinder Sister pitied her, she was not moved to embrace her; and her little body had ached for an embrace, and her little heart had been hot with resentment over the ugliness that robbed her of affection.

As for the dark heritage at which Sister Mary Rose had hinted, poor Mary Ann MacGloin, daughter of as good a blunderer and failure as had ever found life too much for him, and of as pure a woman as had ever borne a posthumous child in a delirium of cold and starvation, Mary Ann grew up—and, indeed, finally went to her grave—convinced that she had ground for the bitterest of all human resentments against the two responsible for her existence. She never even learned that the "ash barrel" was figurative, and that her mother had been found distraught at the orphanage gate and had died in its infirmary after giving birth to Mary Ann. Still less had she been told that these things befell upon a Christmas morning, and that her first whimpering cry had sounded simultaneously with "*Adeste Fideles*" in the chapel. The Mother Superior had decreed that, as it might make Mary Ann vain to know herself a Christmas child, her official birthday had better be December 27th.

Sometimes—quite often, indeed—other children had been adopted out of St. Catherine's. Occasionally, when there had been a shortage of obviously adoptable little girls, Mary Ann had been inducted into a stiff, clean checked apron and a new hair ribbon and led out for inspection.

"She is not a pretty child," the Mother Superior had always remarked on these occasions, supererogatorily, it seemed to the quivering little bunch of hopes and fears and aspirations in the blue gingham; for couldn't the seekers decide for themselves whether or not she was pretty, and might there not be, somewhere in the world, a woman with a taste for thin, straight-haired, sallow children? "But she is healthy—she has never had a day in the infirmary—and she is obedient. She has been well drilled, for her age, in housework, and of course in her catechism."

But the list of her virtues and accomplishments had always proved futile. Some little creature with yellow curls, or pink, rounded cheeks, or a dimple, or curling lashes, had invariably won the parents, the home, the embracing arms, the brooding warmth and cheer that Mary Ann so mysteriously continued to divine existed somewhere in the world for children.

At fourteen, she had left St. Catherine's for St. Veronica's, where older girls were "trained for positions of usefulness," to quote the circulars. There she had learned fine laundry work and fine needlework and plain cookery and other admirable things. And she had learned irrevocably that she was criminally plain—which, of course, she had guessed before. It had been ground into her, as an incentive to study and to work, that no man would ever look at her with the eyes of desire. At eighteen, she had gone out into the world, equipped, in every way that the Order knew, to make her own living and to save her own soul.



"Say, Angy, square me with Miss Peaches here——" "Oh, Ned! You're just the same old cut-up!" giggled Angy.

She had done fine sewing until her eyes had given out under the strain; she had done housework until her temper had quite succumbed to the tension of living in other women's houses and doing things as other women wanted them done—generally with less nicety and exactitude than St. Veronica's had insisted upon. And gradually she had drifted into "waiting," and so, by many, uninteresting steps we come to her pasting the red and green Christmas letters and decorations into Mrs. Duffy's broad restaurant window, and letting the con-

centrated bitterness of years, and a new, hot anger at a new grievance—for Ned Vail was the first man who had ever attempted jocularly with Mary Ann MacGloin—find expression in a profanity she had been taught to believe highly prejudicial to her soul's welfare.

Mary Ann, however, didn't care a rap at the moment about her soul's welfare, and she had an almost intoxicated satisfaction in the iteration of the simple little monosyllable. She dallied with a dream of multitudinous "damns," as her fingers worked busily

on the "Merry Christmas to All." To utter them would be, she felt, almost sweeter than to capture her other cherished dream, which was to return some day to St. Catherine's in a carriage, like those whose arrival used to throw the orphanage into excitement, and to mount the steps trailing a silken skirt behind her—no matter if trailing skirts had gone out!—and there to demand that the homeliest, the least loved child, in the institution be brought up to her for adoption into her home of luxury.

It must have been Angela who passed on the glad tidings of Ned Vail's impertinence, for by evening almost every regular customer of the restaurant had "tried to get a rise out of" the stiff, glum Miss MacGloin by the use of the offensive name. She had taken it all without repartee, merely holding her lips more grimly set than ever and glaring out of her nearsighted brown eyes.

Angela attempted to be innocently reasonable with her about it.

"Honest, Mary Ann," she said, pulling her left side curl a trifle over her forehead, "I don't see what there is to get so hot about. I don't mind it none when the fellows call me a peach or a pippin. It's all part of their fun. Of course, they all say most women ain't got any sense of humor, but, even so, I don't see why you're so hot about it."

"Who said I was hot?" inquired Mary Ann pointedly.

"Oh, well, any one can see——"

"People generally see what they're looking for. If any one is trying to insult me, they'd expect me to get mad. It's easy enough to see why they think I am mad."

"I don't mind it—what the boys call me," repeated Angy broad-mindedly. "It's all in fun. Are you goin' to the dance in Turner's Hall to-night?"

"No," answered Mary Ann briefly.

An answer had not been required, of course. She had not been to a dance

since she arrived at Pine River Junction; she couldn't have danced, had she attended such a festivity, neither St. Catherine's nor St. Veronica's having regarded dancing as a useful accomplishment for the self-supporting young woman. She knew that Angy merely wanted a chance to tell what she was going to wear and with whom she was going and——

"I'm goin' with Ned Vail," Angy was announcing with an air of subdued conquest. "He's a grand dancer. All the girls are crazy about him. But he ain't the marryin' kind. Why should he be? He has lots more fun single. The Vails live up on Red Top, his father an' mother an' two or three of the younger children. He's got married sisters an' brothers all over the country. Well-off people, all of them—an' the jolliest you ever saw. He's sure of a good time even when he's at home."

She seemed to muse with wonder upon this phenomenon. Mary Ann broke the silence unwillingly.

"How does it happen I never saw him before while I've been here?"

"Let's see. You came in August, didn't you? Oh, Ned was on No. 707—you know, the engine that pulled the Summer Special—until that was taken off last month. An' then he took a vacation an' went out West to see one of his brothers. But he's back now."

"An engineer?" She couldn't keep a note of interest out of her voice.

"Yes, on No. 56. Just between here an' Manchester, you know. That's the winter run. I'd hate to marry an engineer, wouldn't you? I'd be always worryin'. I'm like that when I care about anybody."

Mary Ann didn't answer the merely academic question about her taste in occupations for husbands. Instead, she moved over to a customer who had taken his place on a stool at the counter.

"Bowl of crackers and milk, half cream," said the customer, and Mary

Ann departed for the kitchen murmuring to herself, frowningly:

"No, because I wouldn't have anything to do with that. No. I don't want him to have a wreck, after all. I wouldn't have anything to do with that. I want to get even with him myself—myself! *Peaches!*"

The next day, Mr. Ned Vail, entering the Yule-bedecked eating house, might have been observed, by a scientific observer, to dally in conversation with Mrs. Duffy at the desk until Angela Hoskins had switched her pretty skirts through the kitchen door. Then, when the blond vision was safely out of the way, he slid swiftly to a stool and summoned Mary Ann MacGloin.

"Say," he began earnestly, "I want to say somethin' before I order. I hadn't any intention of bein' fresh yesterday—honest, I hadn't. You see, I'd been away, an' was just back home an' was feelin' good, an' I've always called Angy any old thing, an' so—— I didn't rightly look at you before I spoke. I didn't take it in that you were so much older than what she is an' so—er—different. I didn't mean to be fresh. I don't make it my business to go around sayin' fresh things to ladies. I—I hope you'll excuse me if I offended you."

"Order, please," said Mary Ann MacGloin uninterestedly.

Ned Vail's brown grew red; the honest blue of his eyes grew black.

"Oh, very well, then! If that's the way you take an apology, you can go to blazes for all of me!"

With which remark, the young man who had claimed Chesterfieldian intentions toward all women whirled from his stool and stalked out into the sharp, glittering sunshine, all unfortified against the cold by food.

"So much older and so—er—different," Mary Ann quoted to herself bitterly, laying fresh sticks upon the fire of her resentment.

III.

This year the Pine River turkey dealer had brought in some branches of hemlock and some ropes of ground pine as a little offering to his good customer, Mrs. Duffy; and Mary Ann had arranged them with a sort of native taste in big earthenware jars that Mrs. Duffy allowed to be borrowed from their plain daily tasks. She had festooned the mirror top with the fragrant wreaths, and had almost succeeded in having the red and green letters withheld from the window.

"They look so sort of—sort of mean and cheap, compared to real Christmas greens," she offered.

But Mrs. Duffy had declared herself against a "highfalutin'" æstheticism, and Mary Ann had obediently pasted them in the window again.

From the other side of the station came the jangle of sleigh bells. The town lay there—what there was of it—and the men and women from the outlying farms were in doing their Christmas buying, receiving and shipping their Christmas freight. The slow afternoon local, lumbering up an hour or so late, according to present custom—for Ned Vail no longer coaxed the old No. 56 into speed and docility, having won his promotion to the big, new black engine that thundered gloriously through the Junction without pause every midnight, on its way from Boston to Montreal—the slow afternoon local had disgorged a group of bright-eyed boys and girls, home from school, home from college; and the gladness, the tingling pleasantness of it all, seemed to enter the restaurant every time the door opened. Mary Ann fought against surrender to the amity of the season, to the joyful crispness of the atmosphere, but she could not wholly resist them.

She told herself that one element in her feeling of amiability was the re-

moval of her enemy from her circle. For nine months, beginning with the preceding Christmas, she had seen him daily at least once. For nine months, he had given her glare for glare; for nine months, he had been all that was discursive, all that was gay, with Angela and with Mrs. Duffy, he had been heartiness and merriment itself with his fellow lunchers. And through all the good cheer that he had radiated, he had managed—not very subtly—to make apparent a dislike, a distaste, for Miss Mary Ann MacGloin. He had never spoken to her again after the day when she had rebuffed his apologies; she had never spoken to him after her "Order, please" of that day. But the duel of dislike had been fought without the use of words.

Mary Ann had been able to concentrate into this one feeling all the hatreds and resentments of all her life. He had mocked the homeliness that had warped her nature to hardness. It was as if she had been crippled and he had taunted her with deformity. She hated him for it. And now she told herself, when Christmas made itself felt across the tracks and in the big barn of a restaurant, that it was the withdrawal of his obnoxious presence that gave her a sort of glimmering pleasure.

Yet she had missed that daily duel of silent glances, sharp and scornful on his side, stony and bleak on hers. There had been a blankness about life when first he had won his promotion. Next to the withdrawal of a friend, nothing leaves such an emptiness in life as the withdrawal of a foe.

She came back from the window and suggested to Mrs. Duffy that one of the jars of hemlock replace the glistening papier-mâché turkey that simulated juiciness and flavor in the window.

"Who'd uv supposed you was sort of romantic, like that?" asked Mrs. Duffy. "Sure, put it there if you want to. But leave the turkey in, too—shove it down

frontward." And when Mary Ann departed to fulfill this decorative plan, she said to Angela, who was crocheting a wash cloth in a pause in the business: "Did ye ever notice that Mary Ann has real nice eyes when she lets them look human? Big an' brown an' kind of velvety—somethin' like a nice dog's. Her skin's cleared up some, too, since she come here. It's the air—an' the food, if I do say so myself."

The subject of another woman's good looks never had any interest for Angela. She merely grunted.

"Funny the way her an' Ned Vail hated each other," rambled on the good-natured restaurant woman. "They was more aware of each other than most any two people I ever saw——"

"What do you mean?" asked Angela sharply. "Why, Ned despises the ground she walks on!"

"Uh-huh. But he's powerful aware of the fact that she's walkin' on it. An' she——"

"She's a sour-tempered old maid!" snapped Angela.

"Thirty-one. Of course that ain't nineteen. But Ned's thirty-four. I remember he was born the night before I was married an'——"

"What do you mean?" cried Miss Hoskins, thoroughly exasperated. "You talk like they had any use for each other! Why——"

"I dunno's they have," replied Mrs. Duffy philosophically. "All I'm sayin' is this—a good case of hatin' takes up as much of a person's thoughts as a good case of lovin'."

"He's not the marryin' kind," said Angela, half triumphantly, half gloomily.

"Who's sayin' a word about marryin'?" asked Mrs. Duffy, and waddled back to the kitchen.

Now, it was the custom of the two ladies who formed the serving staff of Duffy's Railroad Men's Astoria Café to leave the restaurant at hours alter-

nating between six and nine o'clock. One night Angy went off at six and Mary Ann MacGloin at nine, and the next night the program was reversed. Mrs. Duffy usually stayed until the later hour; her life was lived in the big barn opposite the tracks, and nothing called her with a very insistent voice to her solitary cottage off the main street. At nine o'clock, Peter Herder, who was "study-in' nights," came down and took charge of the place until the three-o'clock night local had passed through, in order that no possible customer should be denied the solace and refreshment of a cup of hot coffee and a fried egg. After that the restaurant was closed until six in the morning.

But for the past three nights, Peter Herder's little brother had appeared each evening to proclaim Peter's tonsillitis no better. Mrs. Duffy, nothing loath, had taken the first night's work; Mary Ann had taken the second, and Mrs. Duffy again the third, Angela having had pressing social engagements on each occasion. This afternoon, when Peter's little brother again hove into sight, with Peter's note of regret, Angela was smitten with an awful fear that she could no longer evade her turn. And there was to be an Old-time Yuletide Merrymaking in Masonic Hall—it seemed that she could not bear to be defrauded of the fun. Olly Jones was going to take her, and Olly was such good sport—a real cut-up.

While Peter's little brother sought Mrs. Duffy back in the kitchen, Angela sidled up to Mary Ann and besought her to take the night's duty.

"All right, I don't mind," said Mary Ann.

And Angela was moved, by the unaccountable working of the instinct of gratitude, to offer to do Mary Ann's hair a new way; the girls had an hour off in the afternoon, when there were no trains scheduled. Usually Mary Ann had no manner of interest in her

hair; but something in the air, in the good-fellowship she had glimpsed from her window, made her unaccustomedly pliant. She actually smiled at Angela.

"Think you can make anything out of my old ugly mug?" she jeered indifferently. "You can't, Angy, but if you like to try——"

And that, skipping several hours, is how Miss MacGloin, her face framed in soft brown shining waves—bandoline and a curling iron had accomplished the transformation under Angy's eager ministrations—sat beneath a nickel-plated coffee urn at eleven o'clock that night and yawned over a novel.

The restaurant door swung open and two men entered, bringing in a gust of cold air. They brought, too, something hitherto unknown to Mary Ann MacGloin—a sensation of prickling fear. They were not the familiars of the station and the train yard, not men of the train crews. And one of them seemed to stagger.

"A cup of hot coffee'll put you to rights, Stub," said the other, steering his companion toward the counter. "But you were a fool to drink that whisky."

"I had to have it, I tell you," mumbled Stub thickly. "I don't pull spikes every night of the year."

"S-sh, you blamed fool!" hissed the other.

He deposited the alcoholically disabled man upon a stool and, calling an ingratiating smile to his face, which was blue and white as if with a stubble of beard, cold, and fright, he said to Mary Ann MacGloin:

"Two hot coffees, miss, if you please, an' a rasher of bacon with a turned egg, if it ain't goin' to be too much trouble."

"No trouble. That's what I'm here for," said Mary Ann, with unexampled communicativeness.

She astonished herself by her outburst of garrulity, and by it she knew

that she was frightened and was making words as boys whistle to keep their courage up. There was nothing in the till, thank goodness! There had been no customers at all since Mother Duffy had drifted out of the place at nine o'clock, carrying the day's receipts with her in a canton-flannel bag.

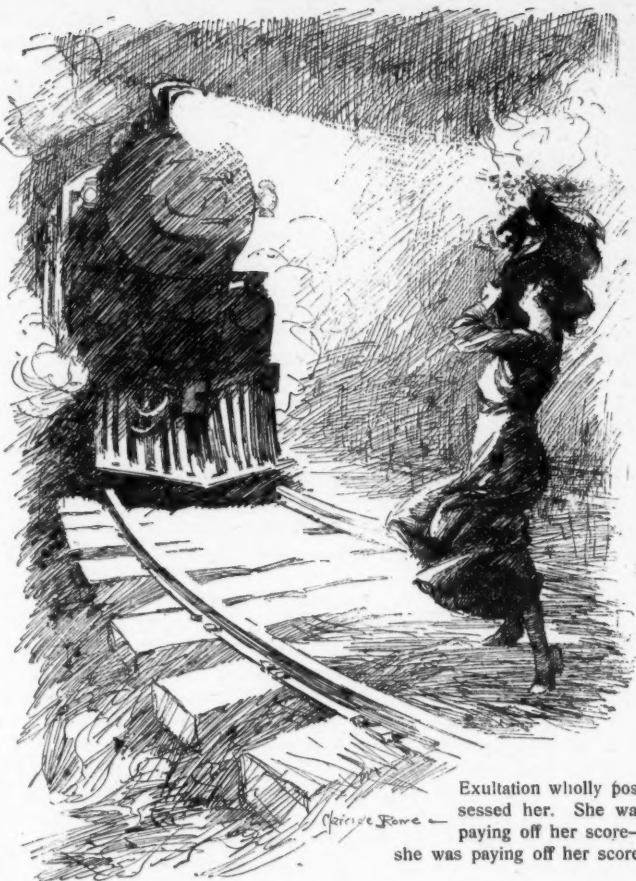
"An' dough-nuts," pursued the ingratiating gentleman. "If it ain't a trouble——"

"No trouble," said Mary Ann again.

She lit the gas under the little single-burner emergency stove behind the counter; after nine o'clock nothing was served that required the absence of the waiter in the kitchen.

"Ask her has she got a little drop of whisky," said the person called Stub, evidently under the delusion that he spoke in a whisper.

"Whisky, you great souse!" said the other in a vindictive undertone. "Whisky! You've had enough of it to drown 'yourself in, a'ready! You drink coffee."



Exultation wholly possessed her. She was paying off her score—she was paying off her score!

"You needn't take that tone with me, Nevins," objected Stub, with sudden impressive dignity. "I won't stand for it! I ain't in the habit of—habit of—habit of"—his dignity dropped swiftly from him, and he bowed a heavy head upon the counter—"pullin' spikes——"

In the mirror, Mary Ann MacGloin, her back to the men, saw the murderous look of the man called Nevins as he glanced apprehensively from his stricken companion to her. She busied herself with the eggs. Pulling spikes

— She fought back the waves of fright that threatened to overwhelm her and carried the plates and the cups of hot coffee briskly across to the counter.

"My friend, here," said Nevins, his evil, anxious eyes boring into her, "ain't used to whisky, an' he took a little drop too much. An' that an' the cold—my, but you know what cold is up here in Noo Hampshire!—they've did for him. I hope his talk ain't disturbin' to you?"

"I've got something else to do," stated Mary Ann, with her own inimitable bleakness, "besides listening to the talk of all the customers that come in here. As for whisky, it's a good thing to let alone."

"You're right there, miss," said Nevins convincingly. He dealt Stub a blow with his elbow, and that young man sat upright with suddenness and an air of belligerency.

"Trackwalkin's a dog's life," he proclaimed angrily.

Mary Ann MacGloin withdrew to the farthest corner of the inclosure made by the counter and the mirrored wall. She did not wish to appear to be listening to any further words that Stub might drop. Her heart pounded with fear. Pulling spikes? She had worked long enough in railroad restaurants to know what that portended. There was a telephone on the shelf behind her, near the till. But there was also an exceedingly dangerous-looking Mr. Nevins taking an acute interest in her movements. And to whom could she telephone? The station was closed. The next train through did not stop there; it was the Montreal express, with Ned Vail captaining its proud, thunderous rush through the blackness of the hills, and it spurned the little Junction.

Ned Vail— Her heart stood still. The chilly waves of fear and of excitement that had coursed through her body since the men had entered the restaurant solidified; she was all ice.

The coffee had done its work with

Stub. He sat erect and surly, with no more indiscretions purling from his lips. His companion begged wheedlingly for a slice of apple pie. Mary Ann cut it with a steady hand and carried it over. It was ten minutes before twelve o'clock by the nickel-plated timepiece on the end of the shelf.

Pulling spikes! The man Nevins, pretending to look for change, displayed, by a somewhat ostentatious accident, a revolver.

"There!" he cried penitently. "Oughtn't to show that before a lady. Ladies is generally afraid of firearms."

"We ain't, in this restaurant," stated Mary Ann decisively. "We keep one ourselves, in case any rough characters should come around nighttimes. Here's your check."

"Add another cup of that coffee apiece to it, will you, please, miss?"

He wasn't going to give her her chance to get out, to get help. She filled the coffee cups at the tank and set them down beside the customers. Then she looked into the milk pitcher.

"I'll have to get you some more cream," she said, with an amiability and a desire to please hitherto unknown in her.

She carried the pitcher toward the swinging door into the kitchen, pushed it open with her arm, let it swing closed behind her. She hummed a tune. It happened to be "*Adeste Fideles*," the choir had been practicing it at the church back of her lodging house the other evening. She hummed it softly while she was near the swinging door and more and more loudly as she retreated toward the rear of the kitchen. She switched on a light as she moved. Swiftly, silently, she seized certain things—a paper, a bundle of kindling, a pail of lard, a box of matches. "Oh, come all ye faithful," she sang clearly, if not musically, and under cover of the noise, she slipped the bolt that opened the door into the alley. In three

minutes more, she was running along the tracks in the direction from which Ned Vail's train would come. No time to call for help, to rouse the sleeping hamlet.

It seemed to her that some one ran after her, and she redoubled her efforts. She cleared the interweaving sidings, she was out upon the straight line of double tracks. On and on she ran to the single line that glittered in the cold blue starlight.

Far away, she caught the throb of the great engine—and, stooping, she poured lard upon paper, she made a blaze. She tore off her dark skirt and added it to the pyre. Then she lifted it, blazing, and waved it above her head. She forgot to wonder if she was pursued. Exultation wholly possessed her. She was paying off her score—she was paying off her score! She was saving Ned Vail's train for him! She threw back her head and laughed wildly as, around the curve an eighth of a mile away, the great, flame-bellowing monster turned, to see, facing him, another figure of flame. She heard the heavy grinding of brakes. They had seen, they were warned—they knew and were saved.

She stepped backward from the track, and in three more minutes was enduring agonies of humiliation because she was clad in a petticoat, a patched woolen petticoat, upon which it seemed to her that innumerable lanterns played mercilessly. But even through her mortification, the singing sense of exultation persisted.

She had a confusion of impressions. There was a young woman with a sable coat thrown on over a traveler's silk negligee, and a gray-whiskered man stood beside her; and they seemed to be especially grateful to Mary Ann. By and by, the confusion cleared a trifle and she learned that they were the chief stockholder of the road, the president of its board, and his daugh-

ter, and that he had been threatened with disaster for his attitude toward the men before a strike had taught him a degree of humility.

"What was it their damnably impudent note said, Mathilde?" he asked the girl, and she repeated the burden of the anonymous message that had promised vengeance upon him for something done or undone; and she kept adding broken protestations to Mary Ann.

"Think," she kept saying, "think! We were going for a Christmas party—a Christmas party! My baby is aboard! Oh, think!"

Other passengers were grateful. Ned Vail stood staring at his ancient enemy. He wanted to blubber with gratitude; he wanted to exclaim with astonishment; but all articulation seemed denied him. The cold stars and the warm lanterns shone on shining hair that waved, on a face excited, happy, radiant.

"She's got looks! She's got looks!" Ned Vail's bewildered brain kept repeating. "And, oh, God, what she's done for me this night!"

What was it that old fox, the president, was saying to her?

"I want you to understand me," he was repeating emphatically, for Mary Ann did not seem to be attending closely to him, and he was accustomed to attention when he spoke, "clearly. You will be rewarded for this night's work—suitably. You will go on the company's pension list; I promise you that. And I personally, I and my daughter—"

"And I! And I! And I!" came from a score of sketchily clad figures.

"You see that your future will be assured, Miss—MacGloin, I think you said the name was? But what my daughter wants to say is this: What do you want for a Christmas gift, apart from the—er—what we may call the permanent—er—endowment—and pension? For a Christmas gift?"

Mary Ann stared at him in bewilderment for a second, and the fur-clad girl called Mathilde repeated her father's offer.

"I'd like," said Mary Ann MacGloin, when finally she became aware in some measure of her fortune, "I'd like to go to the orphan asylum I was raised in and drive up—in a carriage, you know—and take the homeliest, loneliest little girl off for a Christmas. I'd like that. And maybe—if it is so that I could—I'd adopt her out of the asylum——"

"It will be so that you can," said the president succinctly, though doubtless his notion of the necessities of Mary Ann MacGloin and any charge that she might assume differed considerably from his notion of, say, his daughter's necessities. "It will be so that you can."

He wrote something on a pocket pad and handed it to her. Mary Ann took it. Her eyes sought Ned Vail's, fixed on her with wonderment and awe—and what else?

An eighth of a mile the other side of the station, an emergency crew worked replacing spikes, tightening the loosened ties; from the station telephone a puffing constable reported that

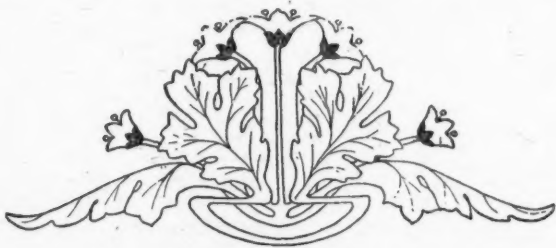
two men had been seen to pass a station four miles up the line on a hand car.

"They're our men, sir. They're our men," he asserted. "Prestonville is warned and will get them."

Had life changed so amazingly in a mere ten minutes? For Ned Vail was saying that he had ten minutes to make up between Pine River Junction and Montreal. And he was saying other incoherent, blundering things; she couldn't half hear them for the happy singing in her ears. But one thing she finally did understand, and her heart expanded like a bud breaking into bloom as, riding roughshod over the inadequacies of his vocabulary, he caught her hand and, holding it tightly, cried:

"Oh, Mary Ann MacGloin, what a peach you are! What a peach!"

The engine roared it magnificently, rolling away into the night; the locomotive sparks spelled it in letters of fire across the Christmas skies; and Mary Ann MacGloin, escorted back to her post by a retinue of congratulatory townsmen and women, found it singing in her heart, to the air—incongruous, perhaps—of "*Adeste Fideles*."



HER CREED

IT was little Margaret's first visit to Sunday school, and the teacher was giving her a little preliminary test, to discover the extent of her religious knowledge. "Do you know how many gods there are, Margaret?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes," answered Margaret promptly. "There's one God and one Santa Claus."

Kriss o' the Curb

By Lee Pape

Author of "The Passing of Tubby," "The Abdication of Queen Lisette," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

A certain little girl chats with a whimsical Santa Claus.

THE little girl had had no idea that candy stores grew so big. There must have been a million different kinds of candy in the window alone.

"But of course," said her mother, "if you come in with me, you'll see, and then to-morrow there won't be any surprise about it."

The little girl tilted her head sideways, which was a way she had of letting things sink in, and then she said:

"I'll talk to this Santa Claus till you come out."

So the little girl's mother went into the candy store, and the little girl walked down to the curb, where the Santa Claus stood by his painted wooden chimney, ringing his bell and thoughtfully stamping his feet. The little girl got to the curb by a sort of semicircular route, because of all the hurrying people with bundles.

"Hello!" said the Santa Claus.

"Hello!" replied the little girl. She looked up at him with her head tilted sideways, her hands in her little gray muff.

"Why's it there's so many Santa Clauses?" she asked.

He looked down at her a moment, and his head also tilted sideways. Without exactly knowing it, when people talked to the little girl, they imitated her way of tilting her head.

"I think it must be because this is an age of science," he answered slowly. "There are so many little girls—and boys, of course—now that I suppose it

would hardly be fair to expect one Santa Claus to keep tabs on them all. So in some scientific way they've divided him up into a lot of us."

"But," pursued the little girl, "why's it each one's a different shape?"

The Santa Claus laughed. He personally was a tall, rather slender one, and somehow not so grandfatherly looking as the others, although his white beard and mustache seemed just as elderly.

"I don't know," he admitted. "Unless it's because science is not perfect, and never will be."

The little girl let that sink in, and then she said:

"Well, I've told two of them what I want. Do you think I better tell you, too?"

"Two ought to be enough," he replied.

He had been looking very steadily at her eyes. Rather wonderful eyes the little girl had. They were very large, and yet not too large, and there was a good space between them, and yet not too much of a space, and the color of them was so nearly hazel that people saved themselves bother by calling them hazel. But the truth was they were a color of their own, and the longer you looked into them, the deeper they got, until sometimes you almost had a precipice feeling that you ought to have something to hold on to in case you grew dizzy. And their lashes were so remarkable that once in a street car a man—a poet, probably, for he knew no

better than to speak out whatever came into his mind—told her that they made him think of weeping willows shading a clear, clear, bottomless pool.

The Santa Claus, after he had looked at them so steadily, spoke, and for some reason he made his voice very low.

"Where did you get those eyes?" he said.

"They're mother's eyes," answered the little girl.

"Ah!" said the Santa Claus, and he trembled. And suddenly the little girl and the thronging shoppers and seven years weren't there, and he was back in the little parlor where last those eyes of liquid wonder had been lifted for him to see as far as he might into their depths, which had been full of tears.

"Marjorie, Marjorie, it's no use! They discharged me this morning! Discharged me for incompetence! Marjorie, I'm not fit to take care of you, not fit to have you, not fit to want you, and I'm going away! Oh, Marjorie, just one week in that dreadful choking office, and I shall always dream of those horrible columns on columns of figures, beginning nowhere and ending nowhere, without meaning for me or use or purpose—swarming, crawling, pitiless! See, Marjorie, I'm crying, I'm crying! I'm not even a man!"

He had seen her only once after that. Intent on her book, she had handed him her fare, and he had abruptly turned his back and gone out and hidden on his platform. He hadn't been a conductor long. The company had employed detectives, "spotters." He had sometimes wondered afterward whether a very poor, sad-looking man whose proffered nickel he had merely smiled at could have been a "spotter."

The little girl had been mentally spelling out the placard on the painted chimney.

"Christmas dinners for two million newsboys!" she announced triumphantly.

"Two thousand," corrected the Santa Claus. "Three naughts mean thousands." He started to say something else, and hesitated, and then said it. It was: "What's your name?"

"Marjorie," replied the little girl.

"Marjorie!" repeated the Santa Claus.

He looked at her so strangely that the little girl thought perhaps he doubted whether there was any such name. So she said firmly:

"Marjorie Pickett."

"Ah!" said the Santa Claus. And he added, "I see," as if the "Pickett" had somehow proved it. Then suddenly he started and asked: "Where's—You're not downtown alone?"

"Oh, no!" and she pointed to the candy store. "Mother's in there, and I'm waiting for her."

And then a rather odd thing happened. In spite of the bustling street, with its wagons and clanging trolleys and clustered or madly scampering droves of human sheep obeying the shrill whistle of Big Boy Blue, and in spite of the thronged pavement with its fringe of shouting curbstone venders, the Santa Claus leaned down, and they talked as confidentially as if they had been swinging in the hammock on the little girl's porch. Only, the Santa Claus kept darting swift, anxious glances toward the door of the candy store.

"Marjorie!" he murmured. And if any one else had looked at her so hard, with such greedy intentness, the little girl would have thought of it as staring. But in this case, she decided, she was merely being remembered.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "are you the one that comes to our house?"

"I'm trying to think," he answered. He glanced quickly toward the candy store and spoke hurriedly: "Let me see—do you live in a great, big house with thin furniture and fat carpets?"



"Why's it there's so many Santa Clauses?" she asked.

She shook her head.

"We live in a two-story house."

The Santa Claus seemed to remember.

"So you do," he nodded. "And that's the nicest size."

"It's got a porch," the little girl reminded him. "With a hammock."

He nodded twice, once for the porch and once for the hammock.

"A house without a porch," he said, "is like a little girl without a sash, and

a porch without a hammock is like the sash without the bow."

The little girl laughed. She had tiny, flashing white teeth and extraordinary dimples, and she laughed up and down a kind of gentle scale of little silver bubbles. The Santa Claus did not start breathing again until a moment or two after it was all over. She was looking at him, then, with her head tilted.

"What do you do," she asked him, "when it's not around Christmas time?"

"I wait for summer," he replied.

"And the very second it's summer, I turn myself into a man with a funny straw hat and dusty shoes and a book in his pocket, and I go for such a long stroll in the country that the chestnuts are falling before I get back."

All the time he was saying this to the little girl, he had a picture of himself at supper in the dining room of a big farmhouse, reciting a rippling new poem in which, with infinite cunning and skill, he had imprisoned the music of the little girl's laugh. The farmer and the two hired men would stop eating to stare, the farmer's wife would go on heaping up plates with a tolerant smile, and the giggling children would stuff grimy fists in their mouths. And after supper, with more of his verses, and stories of his experiences at other farmhouses—with deftly wrought imaginative embroidery to make them really worth the telling—and maybe a song or two, he would keep them all awake and amused till ten o'clock, which surely would be generous payment for his supper and bed and breakfast. And the next morning he would again blithely give himself to the road and the skies and the blue cloud shadows playing swift tag across the fields, content in the knowledge that he had provided all that houseful with a contrast that would linger as a new, pleasant certificate of their own sanity.

"Is there just you?" he asked the little girl. "No little brothers or sisters?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I was going to ask for one, along with the other things, and then I thought maybe we couldn't afford one till next year. We got the piano this year, you know."

"That's so. One thing at a time. Shall I tell you something to say in your prayers to-night?"

She nodded.

"Say: 'Thank you, dear Lord, for not making me a very rich little girl or

a very poor little girl.' Will you remember to say that?"

She nodded again, very solemnly, and then, following his quick look, she explained:

"I saw a lot of people in there. I guess mother can't get waited on."

The Santa Claus spoke in a whisper, a fierce whisper:

"Do you always do everything you can to make her happy?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" she assured him, a little frightened, for he seemed so terribly, though so wistfully, in earnest. "Yes, I *do*!"

She said it so seriously that he smiled in his encircling white mustache and beard.

"I'm sure you do," he told her gently, and the little girl said:

"We're all happy."

"I'm glad, glad, glad!" said the Santa Claus. And he shut his eyes, and the memory of a certain little crooked smile that had always signified pain again stabbed straight to his heart.

The little girl's eyes were fixed on the nearest toy vender, who, with his queer tin creatures hobbling about his feet, was never silent a second, even while making change.

"He is a chatterbox, isn't he?" said the Santa Claus, and the little girl turned to him and laughed up and down the scale of little silver bubbles.

The Santa Claus blinked his eyes oddly once or twice and smiled, and then the little girl's mother, appearing suddenly and seeing them there by the curb in such friendly relations, also smiled.

The Santa Claus whirled to pick up his bell, which had dropped just then. When at last he slowly straightened and turned, the little girl and her mother had gone. And the Santa Claus trembled as he rang his bell so that people might again know they were expected to drop pennies into his chimney for the newsboys' Christmas dinner.

The Lady of Rocca Pirenza

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "By Cool Siloam," "The Awakening of Romola," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

It is with special pleasure that we present this new serial by Anne O'Hagan. It is an absorbing story—a story of character and passion and thrilling incident, a story of to-day, the scenes of which—after this first installment—are laid in Italy. It will run complete through three numbers of SMITH'S.

CHAPTER I.

THE day was destined to live for many years in Cordelia's recollection as the most crowded and eventful of her life. It became, indeed, the point from which life dated. There had been other moments of importance in her twenty-three years, but after this day they grew dim, became merged, as it were, in the nebulous history of a prehistoric time.

Existence at the James Winant House, the social settlement to which Cordelia had retreated in a natural endeavor to circumvent as far as possible the terms of her father's will, had grown a little commonplace. When she had first formed her daring plan of leaving her own colorless, safe, respectable social circle and of seeking outlet for her energies and the savor of new experiences in a neighborhood that her family unimaginatively designated as "the slums" and in an occupation that they regarded as an amiable form of hysteria, she had expected that the excitement of the change would be permanent. But after five months, she had learned that there is, perhaps, as much monotony in a turbulent routine as in any other. In a circle where wife beating is not commonly practiced, an instance of it might lend a breathless and horrifying fascination to the day; but in a circle where it and allied practices are but ordinary and humdrum mani-

festations of the accepted order of things, they soon lose their savor. It was not long before Cordelia found that her observation of the perilous adventures and hairbreadth escapes of poverty left her almost as indifferent as her observations of her own circle.

At the settlement, unofficially known in the ancient corner of the town where it stood as "the Cape of Good Hope"—it occupied a sudden little triangular peninsula jutting unrelatedly out of a long lower West Side street—her own activities had become matters of routine. In the forenoons, she attended all sorts of benevolent committee meetings in the place of Miss Pendleton, the head; or she saw the less important of the innumerable stream of callers who came to the Cape of Good Hope on every conceivable errand, from borrowing bail with which to secure the release of a Sunday baseball player to inquiring for firsthand sociological data or the address of the Italian Lace-making School. In the afternoons, her task was to do "friendly visiting."

She enjoyed the latter half of her duty more than the former. It sometimes seemed to her that she had been born with a craving for alien sights, and her afternoon pilgrimages among the Italian and Syrian tenements that formed her philanthropic "beat" satisfied this craving, in a way.

On her list, on this particular after-

noon, were the Pietro Ferettis, denizens of one of the rear tenements that housing commissions and civic righteousness had not yet driven entirely from the neighborhood. Cordelia's errand was to inquire why the youthful Maria, duly enrolled as a pupil in the settlement kindergarten, had not for three days appeared in pursuit of her education.

Before she entered the narrow hallway that led into the back yard in which the Ferettis' tenement stood, she looked up and down the gay and busy portion of Bleecker Street on which she was, in search of an interpreter. Cordelia had had a noble intention of studying Italian ever since she had come to be a resident at the Cape of Good Hope, but her studies had been sporadic, and she still needed the services of a bilinguistic child from the public schools to help her out when she called upon the older members of the Italian community.

Two or three doors away, she saw Jenny Blanco making a record at skipping rope. Jenny was twelve, and proficient in both her native and her adopted tongues. She came to the sewing class at the settlement on Saturday mornings and to the cooking class on Thursday evenings, and she and Miss Cordelia Stimson were well and, on the whole, favorably known to each other.

Cordelia stood by, patiently waiting while the two manipulators of the rope chanted in solemn excitement the increasing roll of Jenny's skips: "Seventy-two, seventy-three, seventy-four, seventy-five—" Then she interrupted.

"You'll give yourself heart disease, jumping rope like that, Jenny!" she said.

Jenny, panting, desisted from her exercise. As soon as she had sufficiently recovered her breath, she announced to her friends that, but for Miss Stimson's interruption, she could easily have attained a proud hundred. Then she said obligingly that, sure, she would go up

to the Ferettis with teacher—all residents of the James Winant House, no matter how unpedagogic in manner and spirit, were "teacher" to the neighborhood children—and mediate between the two.

It was a long time before Mrs. Feretti opened the door to her callers. When she did, she showed a face gray and haggard with grief. Her garments were rent, as if she had torn them in the stress of some terrible emotion. The room behind her was in darkness, the shades drawn to exclude even such a dim ray of light as penetrated from the dirty court. Scarcely discernible in the gloom was the figure of little Maria, her head upon her outstretched arm at an oilcloth-covered table. The place was bare and alarmingly neat. There were no cooking vessels on the stove in the corner; there were no bundles of coarse overalls for Mrs. Feretti to "finish."

Cordelia, with a sudden fear at her heart, asked what was the matter. Was Mr. Feretti—she hesitated to express the dread in her own mind—was he sick? Had anything happened to either of the two big boys, Tony and Dominick? Jenny, sharp-eyed, inquisitive of glance, translated glibly.

Mrs. Feretti interposed her bent little figure between her visitors and the room behind her. Her inhospitable intention was evident. The child at the table seemed to sleep as if exhausted. Sharply, monosyllabically, Mrs. Feretti answered Jenny's questions. Jenny interpreted, dexterously shifting a wad of chewing gum from one side of her face to the other as she spoke.

"She says, no, Mr. Feretti he ain't sick. She says, no, Tony and Dominick, they all right."

"Ask her if Mr. Feretti is working. Ask her if she has no more overalls to finish. Ask her if she is in any kind of trouble," Cordelia commanded the child.

But Mrs. Feretti, despite the mute

evidence of her haggard face and her rent garments, denied that there was any trouble.

Why, then, Cordelia wanted to know, had Maria been kept from kindergarten? Was not Mrs. Feretti aware that the child must come to school or that they—the older Ferettis—would be liable to all sorts of punishment under the truancy law?

Mrs. Feretti, translated by Jenny, said that Maria should go back to the kindergarten the next day. Then she very unmistakably shut the door in their faces.

"What do you suppose is the matter with them, Jenny?" said Cordelia, puzzled. "Surely there is something wrong there."

In the darkness of the narrow stairway, she felt Jenny's dark eyes boring into her own with a look of most unchildlike wisdom, in which there was also a gleam of childlike glee.

"I betcha," exclaimed the little girl breathlessly—her English was more fluent than elegant—"that's what my mamma and my papa an' my big sister, Rosa, were talkin' about yesterday! I betcha! It's Mrs. Feretti's girl—it's her Eleanora, the one they left home in Italy with her aunt—that they was talkin' about, my papa an' mamma!" Jenny fairly danced across the filthy yard in her joyous excitement.

"What about her?" asked Cordelia.

"Betcha! Betcha!" caroled Jenny. "Eleanora, she's big—she's fifteen when the Ferettis come. She's promised to marry to Ciro. You know him—he comes to the settlement. He's in the young men's club—the Cavours. Eleanora, she's promised to marry to Ciro when he makes enough money to send for her. He's got a good job. He's got fine job. He works in Mr. Cesar Palisi's big store—big, big store!"

Jenny stretched a pair of skinny young arms to indicate the vastness of Mr. Palisi's wine-and-oil warehouses.

"And has Ciro gone back on Eleanora?" asked Cordelia, unconsciously falling into Jenny's vernacular.

"No, no, no!" shrilled Jenny, intoxicated with the sense of her own astuteness. "But Eleanora—she"—her eyes grew big as saucers—"Eleanora, she—oh, she is very bad! Her papa an' mamma they just hear last Monday from the aunt at home how she have a baby! An' Ciro just ready to send for her! He gets awful big wages now! Betcha! Betcha it was Eleanora they meant!"

Cordelia, shocked, looked down at the sharp little face screwed into a gnome-like expression of delight and horror.

"Why, Jenny, you mustn't talk like that! You don't know what you're saying, child! And even if it were true about any one, you have no reason to believe that it's true about Mrs. Feretti's Eleanora. It's very wrong, very wrong indeed, to repeat stories about people, even if you're sure they are true. But when you can't be sure—"

Cordelia came to a pause before the inadequacy of words to describe the wickedness of such a course. Jenny hopped along on one foot.

"Betcha! Betcha!" she piped triumphantly. And then she was off to rejoin her friends at the skipping rope and to push a rival claimant for the hundred-jump mark out of position.

Cordelia went on through the early December twilight, speaking now and then to some child that she knew, nodding to some of the older people, a good deal depressed by the episode of the Ferettis. She had been living at the Cape of Good Hope only five months, but already her residence had amply acquainted her with the prevailing sentiment of the Italian neighborhood in regard to its daughters. She knew that such a misfortune as this one that the precocious Jenny had ascribed to the Ferettis was of all the most disgraceful, the most overwhelming, to parents.

Their daughters existed, in that particular circle of society represented in the neighborhood, for two purposes—to bring in what money they might to the family exchequer and then to marry early and bear large families. She knew how often these early marriages were matters of mere barter between suitors and parents; and she could understand how not only a fierce and jealous family honor, but thrift as well, might have been outraged by such a tragedy as Jenny had just related. She must tell the story to Miss Pendleton and let that experienced woman deal with the Feretti situation. The wise and authoritative head might be able to persuade the parents to send for the girl and give her another chance in a new environment. And then Cordelia thought of Ciro, and of the tales of emotional revenges with which the district abounded, and she pondered.

Absorbed in her thoughts, she made her way through the narrow, crowded streets, beginning to twinkle now with lights, without particularly regarding her possessions. She was jostled more or less, of course; one always was, in this region. Once or twice she was conscious of perhaps an unusual closeness of contact with some passer-by, but, absorbed in the problem of Eleanora's future, she gave the circumstance no attention. Then she was suddenly aware of a hubbub about her, of a restraining hand upon her arm, of excited disclaimers from a boy in the grasp of a big, burly man. She looked from one to the other of the swift-encircling group in astonishment. The big, burly man held a reticule of black jet beads before her eyes.

"This yours, lady?" he asked.

Cordelia's hand slid from her muff into the pocket of her black broadcloth ulster. Then she shook her muff.

"It looks like mine," she confessed reluctantly—the boy in the big man's clutch was such a pitiable little fellow,

working his thin shoulder beneath the iron hand upon it, distorting his thin, dirty face into expressions of whining protest. "I'm afraid it is mine. I don't seem to have it in my pocket."

The burly man drew back the lapel of his overcoat and displayed a badge.

"From headquarters, miss," he said. "Been around here the last two days lookin' for the fellers that got away with Wolfsohn's roll from the bank his last pay day. Guess I've got him, all right." He glared down at his captive.

The boy was protesting his innocence, and half a dozen other people were adding their testimony to the detective's as to his guilt. There was a great deal of noise and confusion.

"Oh, officer," cried Cordelia, almost in tears, "are you sure he took it? He seems so young——"

"Caught him with the goods on," replied the detective, with unction.

And then the throng was increased by the approach of a well-set-up, dark-eyed young man, who towed along, as it were, a very unwilling-looking youth of nineteen or twenty.

"Officer," called the newcomer, shouldering his way into the crowd, "here is your pickpocket!"

There was something slightly foreign in his accent. Cordelia looked bewilderedly at the two men, with their competing claimants for the distinction of having lifted her purse from her pocket. The newcomer went rapidly on with his explanation, which did not seem to meet great favor from the gentleman connected with the detective bureau.

"I saw this fellow snatch something from the lady's pocket as she passed that alleyway back there"—he nodded toward a narrow byway twenty yards down the street—"and I saw him throw it to that youngster there." He indicated the boy in the detective's grasp. "I saw that you saw the little fellow trying to stuff the thing into his coat, and that you were after him, so I fol-



"Officer," called the newcomer, shouldering his way into the crowd, "here is your pickpocket!"

lowed this one, who was about to try to lose himself on a crowded surface car."

"Oh, indeed!" Unenthusiastically the officer of the law received the tale of the amateur. "Well, you'd better all come along to the Mercer Street station. The captain can argue out who's who in pocket picking, and the lady can prove if this is hers."

Cordelia looked helplessly and unhappily from one to the other of the principals in the transaction.

"Oh, must I come? I—I— There really was very little in my purse."

But as she spoke the foolish, futile words, she realized what an "antisocial" remark it was; anything "antisocial"

was anathema to the residents of the James Winant House. So she straightened her shoulders, turning the back of her spirit, so to speak, upon the cowardly feminine desire to escape connection with the unpleasant and the harsh, and added:

"Never mind! I'll come along. I suppose it's the simplest thing to do."

A policeman, appearing at a turn in the street and recognizing the detective, joined them. The situation was rapidly sketched for him. With a nonchalant "Ah! At it again, Ikey?" directed to the second of the two prisoners, he took charge of that young man. Ikey's captor, whom Cordelia now observed to look out of place in that gathering and

that neighborhood, fell back and walked by her side.

"It is too bad that you have to be bothered like this," he said sympathetically, "but I suppose there is no easier way out of it. It was—you will pardon me—too rough a neighborhood for a young lady, especially toward night-fall."

Cordelia gave him a little smile, ever so slightly superior.

"It is the neighborhood in which I live," she said, enjoying her expectation of his astonishment. It was not lacking. "You!"

The young man stared at her. Cordelia was not greatly given to thinking about her personal appearance, but she was suddenly reminded that she was a tall and graceful young woman, with spectacularly golden-bronze hair and a complexion whose creamy fairness was accentuated by her mourning garb. Well, there was one thing to be said for the people of the neighborhood of the James Winant House, and that was that they had accorded her less attention of the unenviably personal sort than she had sometimes evoked in better-bred regions. Here was this young man, for example, obviously of the gentle classes, who was paying more attention to her looks than had been paid to them for five months before!

She answered his exclamation.

"Yes." She nodded. "I'm a resident at the James Winant House. If you are familiar with the neighborhood, perhaps you know it?"

"Ah, yes! It is what you call a settlement, is it not?" The young man's dark, handsome face was alight with pleasure in his recognition of the name.

"Yes. We work among the Italians and Syrians chiefly. Although"—Cordelia fell slightly into the manner of an annual report—"there are also negroes and Irish and Americans in the neighborhood. But they are in much smaller proportions."

"It is chiefly my own people, then, that you serve," he said, in a voice mellow and musical with gratitude. "I am Italian, as you doubtless see from my accent. Although I begin to grow quite vain of my English." He laughed boyishly. "Ah, it is a very beautiful thing that you do! Sisters of Charity, though you wear no habit—"

"Oh, nothing so serious as all that!" Cordelia interrupted. "Seekers after experience, most of us, I am afraid, rather than anything noble."

"I should not have thought signorina, that you would be obliged to come to any—what do you call it?—James Winant House to have experience of life."

His dark eyes were full of flattering personalities. Cordelia stiffened.

"I imagine that our definitions of experience are quite unlike," she said, with an air of finality. And, quickening her pace, she fell in beside the man from the detective bureau. In another minute they were all going up the station-house steps.

She had been there before, sustaining some of the neighbors in their encounters with the law, which had such pitfalls of misunderstanding for them, and she knew the captain.

"Some of your young people in trouble again, Miss Stimson?" he asked.

"I'm afraid it's I who am in trouble this time," answered Cordelia.

And then the detective and the policeman told their story, and the young man told his. Cordelia found herself listening quite intently for his name. Flavian Pirenza, he gave it. He explained how he had happened to be walking through that street. He had been coming uptown from the Italian consul's office when the overcrowded car had become unendurable, and he had alighted with the intention of walking as far north as Washington Square, where he might get a bus for his residence near Riverside Drive.

It was rather an informal affair, the hearing. The captain, the policeman, and the detective took it with an air of being almost bored by it. One of the two prisoners, Mr. Isaac Shea—he had exchanged a long and difficult Russian-Jewish patronymic for a name that appealed to him as likely to be more popular and that was certainly much simpler—was recognized as an old offender. It seemed that he was not yet two months out of prison for his last offense. The younger boy, his pal in the transaction of the afternoon, was hitherto unknown to the police records. He blubbered, sticking grimy fingers into his eyes and declaring that it was all a “frame-up” on the part of the detective. But when he found that blubbering and accusation were not going to save him from being held for trial, he subsided and merely asked Cordelia to send word to his mother.

Cordelia, more moved by his fate than he was himself, and struggling confusedly with recollections of talks she had heard from the prison reformers who sometimes dined at the settlement, promised not only to tell his mother, but to secure bail for him, that he might not have to spend the night in a cell. The captain, the policeman, and the detective heard the promise with looks of mingled amusement, sympathy, and impatience. But Mr. Flavian Pirenza gazed at her as if a way-side Madonna of his native land had stepped from out her shrine to help a breaker of stone upon the road.

“Signorina,” he said earnestly, “I kiss your hands! I abase myself before you! You are angelic!”

The lights at the station door blazed upon Cordelia’s embarrassed blush.

“Nonsense!” she said, but with less than her usual crispness of decision. “That sort of thing is all in the day’s work for us, you know.”

“I suppose that kindnesses are all in the day’s work for the saints in para-

dise,” he told her. But this time there was a touch of humor in his glance and in his voice that made Cordelia feel more at ease. They walked together in the gathering dusk to the settlement.

“Since you are interested in the conditions of the Italians in this country,” something impelled her to say, as they came to the door of the big, busy house, “perhaps you would like some time to visit the settlement here? I’m sure that Miss Pendleton, our head worker, would be very glad to have you.”

Eagerly and ardently Mr. Pirenza declared his deep interest in his fellow countrymen, and his desire to see what the James Winant House was doing for them. While they stood for a moment under the old-fashioned, wrought-iron gas lamp that hung on a bracket above the house entrance, Louise Pendleton herself swung sturdily through the street and came upon them. Cordelia presented the young Italian to the moving spirit of the institution—a big, vigorous, gray-haired, bright-eyed woman of fifty-odd. Cordelia explained how Mr. Pirenza had been of service to her this afternoon and how much he was interested in the work of the house.

Louise Pendleton looked at him with the shrewd, kindly, appraising glance with which she so often struck terror to the hearts of prevaricating applicants for relief and tipped their tongues with confusion. But Flavian Pirenza bore her scrutiny well; he looked eager, hopeful, and properly suppliant. There was something in his aspect that caused the older woman’s bright, ruddy face to soften. A friendly smile curled up the corners of her large, firm mouth.

“I hope you will come to see us, Mr. Pirenza,” she said cordially.

He thanked her with an enthusiasm perhaps a little more effusive than the circumstances of the case seemed to warrant; but Miss Pendleton’s look of friendly understanding did not change.

“Shall we say next Thursday, at half

past six, then? We dine early, so as to have long evenings for our club work," she said.

And when the young man had accepted the invitation and gone away into the shadows of that funny little headland on which the Cape of Good Hope stood, and the two women opened the door upon the buzzing activities of the settlement, Louise was on the verge of putting into words the little gleam of sympathetic amusement that danced across her mobile countenance. But something in Cordelia's expression checked her. She gave a second glance, half startled, at the fair, idealistic young face. She had never seen her young assistant wear just that look before; she sobered suddenly and frowned a little as she pondered its meaning, going up the stairway.

"But that wise old father of hers has practically prohibited her from ever going abroad!" she exclaimed triumphantly to herself in the seclusion of her study.

Then her brow clouded again; Mr. Flavian Pirenza was in America and, for all she knew, had no intention of ever returning to his native land. But Miss Pendleton tossed her sentimental anxieties from her with her street clothes.

"Pshaw! What an incorrigible sentimentalist a middle-aged woman does become! To think of my evolving a whole romance out of two glances in the doorway! I've missed my vocation. I should have been an imaginative writer."

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Solon Stimson's rampant Americanism had passed into a sort of legend even before his death and the publication of his remarkable will. There were few people at that time—when the twentieth century was well out of swaddling clothes, was, indeed, a lusty stripling—who recalled the circum-

stances in which his detestation of everything foreign had had its origin. Least of all did his only child, his daughter Cordelia, understand the root of her father's chief peculiarity. It dated back to the grand tour that Mr. Stimson had taken in 1859 when he had been a young man of twenty-one or two, and to the events growing out of that tour.

He had been an open-minded, open-hearted youth, assured of the friendly intentions of all the world and perhaps especially assured of his own worthiness of these. He had acquitted himself with gentlemanly credit at Yale, and he had looked forward to becoming, in time, the head of the important brass works that his father had established in the small Connecticut city of Wheelville. He had not been ill looking; he had felt qualified to hold his own in any ordinary conversation; and, on the whole, he had been rather inclined to think that he would be doing Europe as much of a favor by his presence as Europe would be likely to do him.

His mother, a timid, gray-haired little woman, unfamiliar with any life but that of the small manufacturing circle in which she had always dwelt, had been the nominal head of the European touring party, consisting of himself and his older sister, Elizabeth. In reality, she had been, of course, the docile follower of her two children, never forced to exercise her own decision in any matter except where their young desires had clashed.

In Paris, the Stimsons had had letters to the American ambassador; and he, conscious of some debt to the elder Stimson, or hopeful of incurring one later in his political career, had been very cordial and hospitable to his compatriots. Through him they had made a few acquaintances outside the American and English sojourners at their hotel and the leaders of the American

colony. And among these acquaintances had been, for Solon Stimson's undoing, the Countess Helena Petrovna, a beautiful young Russian a year or two his senior.

Solon had fallen heels over head in love with her, and the Countess Helena, who had combined the proper freedom of widowhood with all the captivating impulses of youth, had given him what he considered the greatest encouragement. At any rate, she had accepted all his gifts, beginning with a discreet basket of flowers and ending with emerald-set bracelets; she had received him alone at all times of the day; she had permitted him to pay the losses she had incurred with so much charm at gambling.

Occasionally, across the tumultuous happiness that young Solon had experienced, there had flashed the disturbing thought of Helena in Wheelville, Connecticut. But the question had always been one of Wheelville's attitude toward her, not of her possible attitude toward it. In 1859, the ladies of Wheelville, whatever may be their custom in these more enlightened days, did not gamble, did not smoke, did not use even the most chic and fascinating variety of profanity. He had sometimes awakened in the night, coldly perspiring all over, from a dream of Helena undergoing her first social scrutiny from the wife of the minister of the First Congregational, or from Mrs. Bocock, whose husband was president of the First National Bank of Wheelville. But it would have been more terrible yet to dream of an existence in Wheelville, or anywhere else, without the lovely Russian.

It had been a blow between the eyes to him—it had been more; it had been a sword thrust through his heart—when Helena had made it plain to him that she had no intention of sharing his existence in Connecticut. She had done it gracefully enough. She had told him

how she would fade away for want of sunlight in his gray New England; she had told him how her heart would bleed and break for her own beloved country. She had been quite picturesque and touching about it all, but she had been also quite unmistakable.

The boy had been staggered in all his beliefs. Surely, surely, when a woman—a good woman—loved, she expected to marry; and surely, when she married, she was obliged, by all the law and the prophets, to accept her husband's domicile. Was Helena, then, not a good woman? Or did she not love him? But all his young idealism and young strength of passion had repudiated both these explanations. No, it must be that there were depths and complexities in foreign women's temperaments that he was unable to fathom.

He had struggled with that thought for two whole days. Then, for one day, he had covered many sheets of foolscap with combinations of figures. That night, looking gray and resolute, he had sought her again. Since she could not reconcile herself to Wheelville, he would strive to reconcile himself to Europe. He would be able to afford it, in some sort of fashion. He had swallowed spasmodically upon a homesick lump in his throat at the thought of the elms that lined the street at home on which his father's ample, ugly, turreted, gray frame house stood.

He had had difficulty in seeing Helena alone. When he had achieved that result, she had been obviously impatient. Her attitude had made it difficult for him to be sufficiently impressive about what he intended to do for her sake. He had blurted it out, however, finally, in a way that had seemed to rob it of all importance. And Helena, regarding him from beneath bent brows, as if she had a sudden difficulty in understanding his English, had burst into peals of laughter when he had finally made himself clear. To

the very day of his death, Solon Stimson could feel the blood rising hotly to his temples at the memory.

Helena, it had been made plain to him, no more desired an alliance with him in Europe than one in Wheelville. What she had desired of him she had taken—the first fruits of his boyish heart and something over five thousand dollars in bank notes and jewelry; no such great sum for a lady of sumptuous tastes, but rather a large one for Mr. Solon Stimson in the days of his youth and semidependency.

Furious, he had been all for starting home the next day. All Europe had seemed to him populated by adventur-esses, by harpies. It had not occurred to him that he would have the least difficulty in persuading his two women-folk to return at once. He had given them very little attention for the past few months, but he had expected, of course, to find them waiting his nod. And there he had encountered his second overwhelming surprise. His sister Elizabeth had been as bent upon remaining in Europe as he had been bent upon leaving it, and the gray little mother had seemed to sympathize with her daughter's wishes rather than with her son's. Solon, ineffably disgusted by the intimation, had received a hint that there was a Frenchman, one of the old nobility, whose attentions to Elizabeth were very marked.

He had pointed out to his mother that if this were so, it was all the greater reason for snatching the misguided girl home. But he had been quite powerless to influence either the young lady or the older one. Speechlessly irate with his relatives, with his beautiful enchantress, with his own folly, with Europe, with existence, he had rushed home alone on the first steamer, threatening to bring such financial pressure to bear on the situation as would cause Mrs. Stimson and Elizabeth to follow him at once.

But he had reached home to find that his mother had been more expeditious than he. She had written to his father while he—young dupe!—had been dancing attendance upon his Russian. His father's consent had already been dispatched to his sister's marriage with the Frenchman.

It had been an added grievance. He had read Elizabeth out of his affections with much youthful bluster and pomposity, and he had taken such strong issue with his father on the subject of the girl's marriage settlement that the two had quarreled. The conclusion of the Countess Helena Petrovna episode had been seen in Wheelville one autumn evening, when an indignant and outraged old gentleman had ordered an indignant and outrageous young one from his door. Solon had left, breathing fiery defiance.

What might have come of the whole business, but for the Civil War, it is difficult to conjecture. But when the old manufacturer had read that his son had been among the first to enlist in a New Haven regiment, he had begun to be less violent in his denunciations of impertinent young puppies. By the time the war was over, and Solon came marching home, a colonel, with one arm gone, there had been almost no length the father would not have gone for the sake of a reconciliation.

He had not been obliged to go far, however; Solon had worked out all his rancor toward his father on the battlefield. He had been content to forgive and be forgiven; he had been content to take his place in his father's works. The only feature of a generally rehabilitated life that he had been still unable to face was woman. It was incontrovertible testimony to the depth of the wound Helena Petrovna had inflicted that Solon Stimson, albeit long an object of interest to the young ladies of Wheelville on account of his valor, his affluence, and the vague renown attach-

ing to him as a victim of romance, had remained a woman hater until he was past forty-five. Then he had succumbed to the charms of the person who had probably seemed to him most unlike the enchantress of his youth—Mary Hinsdale, the grave and earnest teacher of algebra in the local high school.

That he had never recovered from his hatred of foreigners had been amply shown throughout his career. He had never gone abroad again, he had never permitted his family to go abroad, and he had held no communication with his sister Elizabeth, Baroness de Marny et Revelle. He had even gone so far as to influence his father somewhat in his bequests to the French lady, who, for her part, seemed to have grown perfectly indifferent to her native land and her early associations. In forty years she had made only two or three flying visits to the United States, and on these occasions had declined—to Solon's great relief—to come to Wheelville.

As Solon had grown older and become more and more a figure of importance in his community, his Americanism had become more pronounced, and his hatred of aliens almost an obsession. He used to make journeys to Washington to protest against liberal immigration laws; he had held out, almost to the destruction of his business, against the employment of foreign-born laborers in his mills; at chamber-of-commerce meetings, at Fourth-of-July celebrations, at every sort of public event at which a war hero might naturally be expected to speak, his voice had always been lifted against the foreign peril that he saw darkly threatening the country.

As for Mary Stimson, his wife, she had had to lock in her heart, as she had locked them during the years of her teaching drudgery, all her yearnings to see strange lands and people. By some curious irony of fate, she, who had won

her husband because of her unmistakable, ingrained New Englandism, had dreamed all her life of Alpine valleys, of walled and turreted cities lying mellow in the sun, of swarthy peasants laughing in the popped fields. Her lover had been much her senior, and she had been reticent by nature as well as slightly shy before his years; so she had never told him of her longings. She had known his reputation, of course, as the most ardent champion of pure Americanism that the State had ever boasted; but it had never occurred to her that she, as a rich man's wife, might not have her foreign journeyings. When she had found, however, that this was to be so, she had closed her quiet lips upon useless repinings. If the books she had read were increasingly of countries and customs different from her own, Solon, who had not been given to reading, had never known it. And so existence had gone on until the two—the gentle, dreaming, silent woman and the blustering, warped old man—had been forced to take the long, final journey, to try their lot in the farthest land of all.

Cordelia had been twenty-one at the time of her father's death. She had been very fond of him. To her alone, of all the world, he had shown glimpses of the man he might have been but for that twist to his spirit in his youth. She had been so unfeignedly devoted to him that she had even accepted the amazing terms of his will without disloyal questionings of its validity, which one or two of her young associates had suggested to her was doubtful.

By it she was expressly prohibited from ever visiting any country not under the dominion of the United States, on pain of the stoppage of her income. Her fortune, a comfortably large one, was held in trust for her. All funds from it were to cease if she disobeyed her father's injunction and visited a foreign country. She was to remain





and sand piles of the back yard when she was told that Mr. Pirenza awaited her.

without income so long as she remained abroad. If she should marry a foreigner and go to his country with him, the fortune was to pass to certain pronouncedly American institutions which Colonel Stimson designated. If she should marry a foreigner naturalized and residing in the United States, she was still to receive the income from her fortune, but was to have no control of it. Her children would become its actual owners upon her death. Failing issue, the properties would revert upon her death to the institutions already named. But on the day on which she married a native American, living and doing business in the United States, she was to come into possession of her fortune without further condition or restriction. Thus Solon Stimson had attempted to put into action, as it were, his emotional hatred of foreigners, and, as he doubtless thought, to guard his daughter against such pain and disillusionment as he himself had suffered.

Cordelia had acquiesced, docilely enough, in the ban upon foreign travel that had been the portion of her girlhood. It had not been Mary Stimson's nature to inculcate the seeds of discontent. Whatever disappointment, whatever pain of repressed desires, she herself had suffered through her husband's fanaticism and its resultant tyranny, she had allowed no spoken knowledge of it to come to her daughter. It had been only through instinctive sympathy that Cordelia, even as a young girl, had guessed that there were harmless dreams and aspirations unfulfilled in the life of the sweet, reticent woman who never allowed a syllable of dissatisfaction to form upon her lips. She had shared her mother's literary tastes somewhat, and she had something of the quiet little school-teacher's power of imagination; so she, too, had sometimes had her evanescent visions of stately ilexes, of pink-walled villages drowsing in the hot sun, of white-

capped, velvet-bodied peasant women in the quaint streets of distant cities.

But, on the whole, her young life, with its lessons, its sports, and its mates, had been full enough for her without the fulfillment of the dream. It was not until after the publication of old Solon's will, with its express and intricately guaranteed prohibitions, that she had felt a sudden surge of almost irresistible desire for the things denied her, a surge of anger against the tyranny that sought to rule her even from the grave. And by that time there had been no gentle mother to whom to confide her sense of injustice, her feeling of rebellion. Mary Stimson had died two years before her husband, and Cordelia was quite alone in the world, as far as near relatives went, save for her unknown Aunt Elizabeth.

The first result of her seething of revolt, as has been shown, had been to drive her from the safe, colorless, conventional existence of Wheelville to the James Winant House in New York. The step had been opposed, of course, by the excellent ladies with whom she had lived after her father's death—his second cousins, three Misses Stimson, the youngest a lady of fifty-two who might as well have been five hundred and twenty for any recollections of youth and impulse that she cherished.

Cordelia had found existence very difficult in that gray circle. Nature had given her, in her relations with both her parents, an intuitive, undefined sympathy, as well as that instinctive love, the existence of which it is the fashion to deny in certain circles, such as those in which Mr. Bernard Shaw is still the formulator of doctrine. Moreover, Solon, for all his prejudice, for all the vindictiveness of his obsession, had been a man of force, of intellect, of ability. It had been impossible not to be stimulated by him even in his old age. Nothing of the sort could be claimed for the three excel-

lent ladies with whom Cordelia's abode had been made in the early days of her bereavement.

They had all been extremely shocked and full of misgivings, when, returning from a shopping trip to New York, she had announced her determination to go into settlement work. But it had been too late for cousinly objections to have any weight; Cordelia had already arranged for residence at the Cape of Good Hope. So they had resigned themselves to the inevitable, had told her that her room would always be ready for her, and had told one another that it was a pity her father could not have foreseen this vagary, and guarded against it as successfully as he had guarded her against the perilous charms of foreign lands and foreign persons.

CHAPTER III.

"Can you remember just what it was that Mrs. Feretti said to you?" There was anxiety in Miss Pendleton's voice, a crooked line of worry between her eyes.

"She didn't say anything at all," replied Cordelia. "That is, nothing about what it was that was troubling her, nothing about the cause of Maria's absence. It was Jenny Blanco who evolved that theory of the elder daughter, Eleanora, for me. Why do you ask? Has anything happened?"

"They're so frightfully secretive!" grumbled Louise Pendleton. "I've lived here in their midst for eighteen years, and I know no more about the Italian temperament than if I'd been living down East, on an island in Casco Bay. They simply will not trust outsiders."

"But what has happened?" persisted Cordelia.

"Oh, I'm not at all sure that anything has happened. Mrs. Feretti affects suddenly to misunderstand my Italian. It's perfectly good Italian, as you know, and she has never failed to

understand it when it was a question of gaining anything. But now she acts as if I were speaking Choctaw and she merely reiterates to everything I say, '*Non capisco, signora.*' You know," she added, laughing, "Mrs. Feretti thinks it's high time I acquired a married woman's title, and so she gives it to me. But in spite of her lack of understanding, I have managed to find out from the neighbors that the story that little imp, Jenny, told you is true. The girl, Eleanora, whom they left at home until Ciro Palisi should be able to send for her, got into trouble, and the Ferettis learned of it in October, just a few days before your pocket was picked. I made arrangements to have her brought over here——"

"The Babbitt Fund, I suppose?" said Cordelia, smiling.

Louise flashed a look of startled indignation upon her young assistant.

"Yes, the Babbitt Fund. What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Cordelia discreetly, looking out through the sheer white curtains of Miss Pendleton's sitting-room windows.

Louise made a sound strongly resembling a snort, but she did not pursue the topic of the Babbitt Fund. Instead, she returned to the Ferettis.

"If Ciro did not want her any longer, regarding her as damaged goods, I had arranged for her to be trained at any kind of work she showed aptitude for. So that she could take care of the baby, you know, and lead a self-respecting life. It could all have been managed very easily and without any dreadful scandal for those poor Ferettis. But will they have it? Not at all! They prefer their own method of dealing with the situation, and I'm not at all sure that their method doesn't include stilettos. The worst of it is that the father seems to have disappeared. I'm so afraid he has gone to attend to the matter himself. Tony and Dominick

are supporting the family—that is, with the help of Mrs. Feretti's overalls. It's a shame! Why won't people be reasonable—and kind?"

• Cordelia looked very steadily out through the muslin curtains, although the familiar view of the tenement windows opposite scarcely justified the intent survey.

"Why don't you ask Mr. Pirenza to talk with them?" she asked in an even voice, without turning her head. "He keeps on declaring that he would like to do some work for us. Why not turn him loose on this job? I suppose he would have some understanding of the views of his compatriots."

By the time she had finished the sentence, she had brought her eyes back from the opposite street. They met Louise Pendleton's now quite calmly, but there was a distinct flush all over the smooth, fair face.

"That might not be a bad idea," answered Miss Pendleton, also carefully casual. "Do you know when he is likely to be down again? I might speak to him about it then."

"He's coming this evening," replied Cordelia. "He's taking me to the opera—'Aida.' He deplures"—her grave face broke into sudden dimples—"my fondness for German music."

"What has he to do with your tastes?" growled Louise, making a commotion among the papers on her desk and then scowling at it. "Besides, do you think you ought to be running around unchaperoned? You seem to forget that you're an heiress, and that chaperons are part of the natural equipment of an heiress. To say nothing of the fact that he's an Italian."

"Don't be absurd, boss," said Cordelia with a laugh. "I'm a social worker, that's what I am, and social workers neither use nor require chaperons. As for Mr. Pirenza—it's a very enlightening and educating thing for him to know me and people like me.

Who can tell? It may be the beginning of emancipation for the young women of Italy!"

"I wonder what he really thinks of it," speculated Louise Pendleton. "Of the freedom of our young women, I mean."

"He thinks it's perfectly splendid. Really he does—you needn't smile in that skeptical way. I'm not joking, and he's not pretending. He's as much in earnest when he tells me how he admires American institutions and the self-poise of American women as—as anything," she ended weakly. "He isn't a deceiving, dissimulating sort of person—not one of your warped, Jesuitical, medieval Italians, always revolving schemes, or preparing poisons. He's as frank and outspoken—he's more frank and outspoken—than any young American of my acquaintance."

"He's certainly vastly more fluent," admitted Louise.

"And do you regard that as a fault?" In spite of herself, there was a note of heat and challenge in Cordelia's voice. There was a little fire in her eyes as she looked at Louise, awaiting reply.

"Oh, no, not a fault. Only I'm too old really to understand new types—to believe in them, to enjoy them. Of course, I can see his charm. One doesn't need double lenses for that! But, after all, what do you know about him? What does any one know about him? I don't mean in the vulgar matters of name and station and all that; I mean about his temperament, his spiritual necessities. Don't you suppose that there would come a time, if one—if one——" She floundered and looked with embarrassment at her young assistant.

"If one?" repeated Cordelia, icily, plainly determined not to let her chief off from saying what was in her mind.

Louise seized her courage in both hands and went on.

"If one really allowed oneself to

form an intimacy, an affectionate relation, with him, would there not come a time when he would find one's language as incomprehensible as Mrs. Feretti is suddenly finding my Italian? Oh, you know what I mean, my dear! I've tried not to say anything. I've tried not to interfere. But I'm worried. Aren't you seeing too much of him? Aren't you allowing yourself to drift into—oh, into a difficult position in regard to him? He's very obviously—interested—in you. What are you going to do with him if he falls in love with you?"

The older woman's anxiety was palpably born of her affection. The look that she turned upon Cordelia was one of love. Cordelia, although the rigid pose of her young head and the distant gaze of her young eyes indicated a determination to keep Louise Pendleton, and all the rest of the busybody world, at arms' length in what concerned her heart, was not proof against the tenderness of that solicitude. The little casing of ice seemed suddenly to melt from about her; she brought her eyes back from the street and looked at Louise. There was something soft, something wistful and, at the same time, something merry, in them. A warm, bright color ran up her face.

"Perhaps," she suggested, half mischievous, half meaningful, "in those circumstances I might decide to fall in love with him myself. Would there be any terrible objection? After all, you know, it's class—it's training—that counts, not race. All civilized persons understand one another!"

"Cordelia! Do you mean to say that you are—that you do—care for him?"

The flush on Cordelia's face deepened, but her eyes were steady.

"I don't think it would be hard to care for him, do you?"

"One of the easiest things in the world, I'm afraid," replied Miss Pendleton, with a rueful laugh. "But—he doesn't mean to stay in this country,

does he? I thought he was here only on some sort of a quasi-diplomatic mission?"

"Well?" Cordelia awaited the conclusion.

"Well, but my dear child, you can't marry a foreigner. What is the use of blinking facts?"

"You mean on account of poor papa's will? It would be inconvenient, of course, not to have any money of one's own. But suppose one's husband had enough for both?"

"Such a thing has never happened in the whole history of international matches," declared Louise vigorously. "Does Mr. Pirenza know the terms of your father's will?"

"Mr. Pirenza has never displayed the least anxiety in regard to my financial condition," replied Cordelia proudly. "Of course, that may mean that he has only a very superficial interest in me as a type, and no deep interest in me as a person. But I have thought that it might mean"—her eyes, her lips, and her voice were all suddenly tender—"that some of those things we hear about the mercenary foreigner are false."

"Cordelia!" wailed Louise Pendleton. "You're in love with the man!"

"Am I? I wish I were sure!" Again she spoke half mischievously. Then she sprang from her chair and, crossing the room, enveloped her bothered senior in a big embrace. "Don't you worry, you poor dear! You have enough on your mind without taking over the love affairs, or flirtations, or whatever they may be, of your residents. Shall I ask Mr. Pirenza to try his hand with the Ferettis?"

There is one bait to which the conscientious settlement head worker always rises—the bait of an immediate advantage to the affairs of her institution. Louise Pendleton sighed.

"Well, if you're going to persist in having him dangle, I suppose he might

as well be made useful. He might be able to find out something definite in regard to the Feretti situation, and I suppose he might even be able to overawe her and so to influence Mrs. Feretti a little. Hasn't he some sort of a title in his own land?"

"Yes," answered Cordelia, demure and indifferent. "He is a count, I believe."

"A count!" The head of the James Winant House repeated ruefully. "A count!"

"Don't be overcome, dear," advised Cordelia with a laugh. "He's not a prince of the house of Savoy, or whatever the name of the reigning house is. And he assures me that counts are more common in his part of the world than colonels are in Kentucky. The woods are full of them. According to him, there's no particular renown attached to the title."

"But why doesn't he use this title, anyway?" demanded Louise bewilderedly. "It's so embarrassing—to realize that you've been talking to a nobleman very much as if he were the bootblack at the corner."

"It needn't embarrass you in the least," said Cordelia calmly. "Mr. Pirenza is a good deal of a republican. I believe he quite looks forward to the day when Italy will have a democratic form of government. And he's quite sincere in saying that there's no particular reason for his carrying that title with him all over the world. He says it's merely excess luggage, costing him a great deal more than it brings him in. Really, Louise," she added half impatiently, "you seem more overcome than if I had told you you had been entertaining an angel unawares. Remember your history. Do a little mental arithmetic. If there used to be an untold number of Italian principalities, and if all the children of every little princeling in all the principalities inherited a title of some sort, even if they didn't inherit

much else—well, you can see just how important it must be to be a count now! Do cheer up."

"I can't," declared Louise Pendleton. "It makes it all the worse—his dangling after you, I mean. You needn't try to persuade me that any European with a well-authenticated title ever brought it to this country for any other purpose than disposing of it advantageously. Oh, Cordelia, do be careful! Don't fall in love with that young man!"

"Anything to oblige you, boss," answered Cordelia flippantly. "We'll use our count only to overawe poor Mrs. Feretti! And you really might do him the justice to remember that he is not advertising his rank in the marts where it might sell!" And with a laugh, she departed from the anxious presence of her chief.

Louise looked for a while toward the door through which she had disappeared. Then, sighing, she dismissed the sentimental problems of the situation from her mind and fell to work upon her annual report.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the little cubicle in which she dwelt, Cordelia was solemnly considering the question of the frock she should wear that evening. She was moderately sincere in leaving Miss Pendleton under the impression that she scarcely knew the real state of her affections—she had been very careful not to examine them. But perhaps that astute and experienced judge of human nature might have received more illumination on the subject from the way in which Cordelia studied her dresses than from all her verbal attempts at self-expression.

There was a wonderful garment of soft, shimmering lilac satin and tulle that had just come home from the dressmaker's. It marked Cordelia's emergence out of her somber blacks. It was a lovely thing, and she was sufficiently acquainted with her own points to realize just what an effect she would

create, with her warm, fair skin and the beautiful bronze of her hair, if she should come sweeping down the settlement stairs arrayed in it. Still, she hesitated, as women always hesitate over their first sartorial announcement to the world that they are no longer preoccupied with grief and loss. She laid an evening gown of black net out upon her bed beside the lilac.

But by and by, with a shake of her head, she put the black away again. She would wear the light-colored robe; she would announce herself once more a denizen of the bright world, an aspirant for joy and happiness.

She unlocked her trunk and fished from its obscurest corner a jewel case. All her mother's gems, valuable, uninteresting exponents of the jeweler's art, were hers now. She looked upon them with disfavor. They looked like Wheelville; they subtly suggested the best provincial manufacturing circles. She put them all back again, the diamonds, the emeralds, the rubies. She would wear only her own pearls; they were very good ones, she knew. After all, their soft, milky sheen would comport best with the radiance and delicacy of her youth.

Late in the afternoon, one of the maids brought to her room a florist's box. She opened it without excitement, though with a little pleasurable thrill. There would be lilies of the valley, she supposed, within, or maybe violets. These were the two flowers that Flavian had always sent her, with due regard to her mourning.

But when she lifted up the cover and the layers of paper, she gave a little startled exclamation. A bunch of orchids, as wonderful and brilliant as gems, as butterflies' wings, lay in the white nest. Their brilliant, burning beauty seemed to her excited imagination like a message from the young Italian that he, too, knew their relation was to enter on a new phase. She

caught her breath, suddenly a little timorous.

After dinner, during which she had been rather silent and distraught, she went back to her room and dressed for the evening with the sense of adventure strong upon her. She was not sure what she felt; she was not sure what she wanted. But one thing she knew, and that was that she desired to see whither the stream would bear her.

Excitement, self-consciousness, dread, anticipation, all the myriad emotions of the girl standing on the brink of a great experience, and aware of where she stands, lit her face to a new and wonderful radiance as she swept down the stairs in her bright garments, the milky pearls about her throat, the orchids against her breast.

Flavian was standing at the foot of the stairs, as she had known he would be. She felt, rather than heard, the suppressed gasp with which he greeted this fresh apparition of her. She felt, rather than saw, the sudden leap of flame in his dark eyes. She held out her hand to him without speaking. Without speaking, he took it and kissed it. He had never done that before. He had shaken it always in the good, unsentimental, American way. The trivial, pretty, artificial little ceremony seemed to her pregnant with meaning.

He was very punctilious. In the taxi, in the opera house, even under the spell, at once relaxing and uplifting, of the music, although his eyes were fixed upon her constantly with new meanings and new admirations, he said no word that a whole choir of chaperons might not have heard; he sought no closer nearness to her than he would have done beneath the gaze of the grimmest of duennas. Cordelia, who felt herself perilously ripe for yielding, was aware of his restraint, and it gave her an unexpected admiration for an unexpected element in his character, added a new thrill to the excitement that his pres-

ence caused her. By the time he returned her to the James Winant House, she was ready to believe the emotions she felt to be love. For, to her joy, there was respect as well as excitement in her feeling.

"There's something I want to say to you," he said to her at the settlement door. His voice was curiously muffled; his face, in the glare of the light above the entrance, was very pale. "May I come to-morrow?"

"Yes," she said, and was surprised and a little aggrieved to note how low and tremulous was her voice. Her maiden pride revolted at the revelation which that low monosyllable had afforded, and she hurried on: "I was going to ask you to come. There's something we want you to do for us, Miss Pendleton and I."

He seemed scarcely to heed her. He made no polite protestations of his anxiety to be of service.

"To-morrow, then, at four?" She nodded, with an attempt at lightness. "And is there some place," he went on, "where I may speak with you alone, without danger of interruption? This settlement of yours, it is not adapted to secrecy."

"Oh," replied Cordelia, again with that effort at lightness, "I dare say Miss Pendleton will lend me her sitting room. And there," she added, laughing, "one is liable to very few interruptions, not more than two or three in every five minutes."

He paid no attention to her feeble little attempt at ease and indifference.

"To-morrow, then, at four," he said. And then, almost as if it came involuntarily with the mere passage of his breath, he spoke her name: "Cordelia! Cordelia!"

CHAPTER IV.

The sluggish winter dawn was shining in at her windows before Cordelia fell asleep. All night she had been say-

ing over and over again foolish, inconclusive things.

"He is in love with me—am I in love with him? I am in love with him—is he in love with me? It is so long to four o'clock! I want to see him again! His eyes—how dark they were! How they burned into me! How pale his face when his feelings are strong! Am I in love with him? Is he in love with me? Do I want to go to Italy to live? Will he want to live in this country with me? Why, I don't know anything about him! Three months ago I had never seen him. It's absurd! How dark his eyes are! Is he in love with me? What is it to be in love?"

And having found no answer to any of these questions, Miss Stimson finally fell wearily asleep when the December daylight was making gray squares upon the blackness of her walls. And her uneasy dreams were not of love and lovers, but of the drab street in Wheelville upon which her father's house stood. In her dream, she seemed afflicted with a great sadness and a great longing for that drab street; but for some strange reason, although she could see it lying before her, she could not by any effort reach it.

When she awoke and went downstairs, the events and the emotions of the night before seemed almost as unreal and shadowy to her as the dream. Now and then, across her morning's occupations and her absorption in them, there would run a little shiver of recollection or of anticipation; but on the whole the impression of the night before was scarcely more vivid than that of her sleeping vision. Indeed, that, too, from time to time, obtruded itself upon her—the quiet, elm-shaded street, with its large, ugly, affluent-looking houses set back upon their terraces.

The vision made her a little homesick. She must run up to Wheelville soon and spend a Sunday with Cousin Susie and the rest! And then she thought of

her father and of how he had hated all aliens. For a second she felt that she was disloyal to his memory in that she had allowed her pulses to flutter at the glance of one whom he would have forbidden her to see.

But that feeling passed. Old Colonel Stimson had destroyed the subtler, more spiritual form of bondage when he had attempted to impose a material and legal one upon her. In a vague way, she felt that her father had absolved her from inner obedience to his wishes when he had drawn that will. He had done his utmost in that; he had preferred to rely upon that which had seemed to him more compelling than love and reverence. Therefore, she felt, in some cloudy way, that love and reverence were out of the issue, that she was free of their compulsions. Yet all day she kept thinking tenderly of the gray home of her youth.

She was overseeing the play of the tiny children of the neighborhood among the swings and sand piles of the back yard of the James Winant House when she was told that Mr. Pirenza awaited her. It seemed to her self-consciousness that there was a gleam of understanding in the dark eyes of the maid who brought out the message. She felt herself blush beneath the look, but she said, with elaborate indifference:

"Will you show him into Miss Pen-



Mrs. Feretti repeated the name with a sharp sort of cry.
"Pirenza? Pirenza?"

dleton's sitting room, please, Hilda? And let her know that he is there?. She wants to speak to him about something. And will you please send Miss McCarthy out to superintend the rest of the play hour?"

"Miss Pendleton went out about fifteen minutes ago," volunteered Hilda, turning to execute the orders.

"She will be back soon," asserted Cordelia firmly.

She waited until Miss McCarthy came out to relieve her before she went in. She was very conscientious about the game she was teaching the little creatures—meticulously so. She took a pride in showing herself how well under control were her nerves; she was no fluttering, excitable creature. And she would not go to her room to brush her hair, to straighten her collar, to

powder her nose; she would seek Louise's sitting room exactly as she was! As for last night, it no longer swayed her. As for anything—

She turned the knob of Louise Pendleton's door. She entered the pretty, quiet little room—the one still haven in the turbulent sea of philanthropic effort that beat through the Cape of Good Hope. There was a dark figure standing between her and the light. She closed the door behind her with an effect of great precision. Her wrists were suddenly as weak as water. She could not distinguish his face, his features, standing there against the light; she seemed blinded. She opened her lips, but the casual words she had meant to utter stuck in her throat. There was no sound for a space—was it a minute, or only the fraction of a second? And then his arms were about her and his voice was in her ears.

"My darling! Oh, my darling!" he was saying.

Then the mists cleared from her eyes and she saw his face—pale and radiant and very, very dear. It had been love, then, that unrest and uncertainty! It had been love—for her heart swelled with tenderness and joy, and she was happy.

By and by Flavian proposed to her in due form. Meantime, they had swiftly interpreted every word and glance they had interchanged during the past three months as proof incontrovertible of love, and had told each other how stupid they had been not to have known what a miracle had occurred on the very night they met.

"How you will love Italy!" he cried at last. He was looking at her with tender pride; it was as if he were envisioning her in the most beautiful and splendid scenes, and finding them only a fit setting for her loveliness. "You will love it! It was made for you—Why, Cordelia, what is it, my own?"

For Cordelia had shrunk away from him.

"Flavian!" she cried. "Oh, Flavian! I forgot! I truly forgot all about it. Perhaps you won't want to marry me."

"Perhaps not!" he scoffed.

"No, but really! If I marry you and go to Italy with you, I shan't have any money." Her eyes, hazel bronze, dark lashed, beautiful, sought his appealingly.

There was no change in his expression.

"And have you some money, then?" he asked lightly, disdainfully. "You see, I had forgotten to inquire about it! But tell me what it is you mean."

She told him the story, softening, so far as was possible, the tale of her father's dislike and distrust of foreign races. He listened attentively.

"So you are really a rich woman—an heiress," he said at last. "I had no idea—I am glad I had no idea, *Cordelia mia!* For I should not have dared to aspire to you—or, rather, I should have been ashamed to aspire to you! One knows the tradition of the needy foreigner and the American heiress. It makes one blush for them all—the needy foreigners and the American heiresses, both. So I'm glad that I did not know you had all that money. Do you mind giving it up, sweetheart? For I have next to none, I am obliged to tell you. Do you mind?"

She gave him a look of pride and tenderness.

"You don't know how I love you for that!" she said. She caught his hand and kissed it. "Oh, I knew—I knew—that it would make no difference to you!"

"And it makes none to you?" he persisted.

"Look at me," she said. "Do you think it makes any difference?"

He gazed deep into her beautiful eyes. They were effulgent with ten-

derness, with generosity, with love's first passion for surrender. He raised her fingers to his lips.

"You are an angel!" he told her. But the stereotyped words were spoken with a fervor of conviction.

"No," Cordelia insisted, "only a young woman in love."

"Ah, that is better than all the angels in heaven," he replied.

But by and by he came back to the question of his condition.

"It is really serious, you know, my darling," he told her. "I haven't a thing that isn't mortgaged up to the hilt. Oh, yes, I have one possession that isn't mortgaged, because I never found any one sufficiently foolish to lend me any money on it. That is Rocca Pirenza. I have stayed there very little. It's in Calabria. My younger brother is fonder of that sort of life than I am. I've rather let him run wild up there."

"Your younger brother?" Cordelia's voice, softened by her feeling to the mellow, cooing note of a dove, managed, nevertheless, to express some surprise. Then she laughed. "But why should I be astonished?" she asked. "After all, we have never talked about anything much but ourselves, have we?"

He laughed, but a trifle absently. He was still marshaling his resources in his mind.

"The Palazzo Pirenza in Naples is let out in public offices," he said. "But I never even see the rental money. It goes straight into the hands of the mortgagees." He laughed ruefully. "It's a shocking thing, my dear, and one that I ought to be ashamed to tell you, but I have no secrets from you. My father could not be trusted to use those rentals to pay his interest and to keep up his taxes properly. So they had to be—what would you call it?—trusted—for the benefit of his creditors. The arrangement continues even

since his death. It is better so." He shrugged his shoulders as if dismissing an unimportant matter. "I could not trust myself to see that the money went where it belonged any more than my poor father could."

Cordelia laughed a little unsteadily, as if at a jest she could not comprehend, and gazed at him out of widened eyes. It was not thus that the race of Solon Stimson regarded its financial obligations. It was not thus that debt was viewed in Wheelville, Connecticut. Poverty—yes, that was thinkable, that was understandable, forgivable. But light-hearted indifference to obligation! Then she laughed more naturally. Of course Flavian was joking.

"Tell me about your brother," she said to lead thought away from that gay old Neapolitan reprobate—she visualized her fiancé's father as a sort of gentlemanly brigand—to a topic less likely to disclose deep-seated differences in ethical standards. "You say he is younger than you?"

"Yes. Benedict is twenty-four. There're only three of us left—he and I and my sister, Antoinette. She married an Englishman, you know; or perhaps you don't, since, as you say, we have talked chiefly about ourselves, you and I."

"Does she live in England?"

Cordelia felt a sudden loneliness. To be sure, she had not known half an hour before that Flavian possessed a sister; but already she felt defrauded by the thought that she might not be in Italy to welcome her, Cordelia, to be her friend, her intimate, a little compensation for all the companionships she would give up when she married Flavian. Unless—perhaps—he could be persuaded to renounce his own country. She interrupted his answer to her question about his sister with a little cry.

"Oh, Flavian! Why couldn't we do

that? Why couldn't we live here? Apparently there is nothing back there that calls you very insistently. And if you stayed here, we should have plenty of money."

She broke off, interrupted by a look of dark anger on Flavian's face.

"Give up my country? Give up Italy?" He flung the words at her. "No!" And then he added: "So you do regret the money, after all? So you aren't contented with poverty?"

"It's not that," replied Cordelia, a little amazed at his violence. "I was thinking—truly—rather of you than of myself. I was thinking that you could do a lot for your estates. I have a pretty big income, you know."

He stared at her, somewhat disarmed by the calm reasonableness of her manner, but still a little uncomprehending.

"But why should I do anything for my estates, if I am not to see them, not enjoy them?" he demanded. "For whose sake should I improve them?"

"Well, there are your brother and sister. I suppose they could enjoy the use of them. And—and"—a great blush traveled up the creamy softness of her face, but her eyes held steady—"there will be your heirs. They would have control of their own fortune."

"Cordelia! Sweetest!" Another change in his face; again he was the devotee, gazing rapt upon some miraculous apparition at the altar. "You are an angel—all unworldly, all sweetness, all generosity! But no! I could not give up my country! And as for the estates, they must support us, not make us support them. Let all those American relief societies of which you told me get your poor father's money. We shall have what is better than money, shall we not?"

Cordelia, lost in the fathomless look he bent upon her, murmured an affirmative. Nothing mattered—nothing in

the world—except this sweet, thrilling languor that pervaded her, this great desire to give—to give and still to give—until there was nothing left of herself or of her possessions for further surrender.

There was a brisk, substantial tread along the hall. Cordelia laughed nervously.

"There comes Miss Pendleton," she whispered. "Shall we tell her?"

"When am I to see your guardian?" he asked in reply.

"But I have none, except the bank," answered Cordelia.

And while Flavian struggled with the difficult thought of proposing in due Italian form to a bank for permission to wed, Cordelia's shining eyes were directed toward the door. It opened, and Louise Pendleton entered her sitting room. She glanced from one to the other of its occupants, and a little sigh was caught back behind her lips before it reached the air. No need to tell her anything. She read it all in the girl's excited beauty.

"Or we might call Miss Pendleton my guardian, for the moment," Cordelia informed her lover.

"In that case," said Flavian, prompt as a trigger under pressure of a finger, "it is to Miss Pendleton that I will make my prayer. Signorina, I kiss your hands"—he stood up before her and suited action to the word—"and I beg you for permission to marry this young lady here in your charge, under your roof. She has given me to understand"—his face was as full of mischief as Cordelia's own—"that I am not entirely indifferent to her—that, with your good will, she will consider my proposals."

Louise released her hands from the young man's ardent grasp. She sat down rather heavily in the chair beside her desk.

"So it's come, has it?" she asked dryly. "And you want me to say a

'Bless you, my children,' do you? It's very considerate of you. Please think it said. I do hope you'll be very happy, and I suppose there's no reason why you shouldn't be as happy as most."

"Don't let your enthusiasm run away with you, Louise," said Cordelia, half laughing, but a little hurt.

"Oh, I don't mean to throw cold water on your joy," Louise apologized wearily. "Only I've just come from seeing some of your incomprehensible fellow countrymen, Mr. Pirenza, and I feel utterly bewildered by them. How that child there"—she nodded her gray head toward Cordelia—"can think of taking one of you on for the rest of her life is almost more than I can see."

"The Ferettis again?" asked Cordelia sympathetically.

The head worker nodded.

"Yes, the Feretti. Mrs. Feretti firmly declines to send for Eleanora, although I've offered her passage money out for the girl and have absolutely guaranteed her future when she arrives. But not at all! They want to settle the thing in their own uncivilized way."

"But we were going to ask"—Cordelia hesitated a minute before pronouncing her fiancé's name—"Flavian to go and see her and to use reason with her. Is it too late?"

"Do you suppose you could do anything?" Louise turned to him with a sort of desperation. "The case has really got on my nerves. I feel that the Ferettis are my own particular ewe lambs—I can't begin to tell you all I've been through to get them established on a self-supporting basis—and now to have an inner conviction that they're going to throw the whole thing overboard—work, opportunity, everything—just to gratify some primitive idea of vengeance—it's too much! I can't bear it!"

"Do you suppose I could do anything?" Flavian looked from her to

Cordelia and back again to her. It was Cordelia who replied.

"It might be worth trying. Of course, we aren't sure of anything. They're so fearfully noncommittal, your people."

"Our people," he corrected her softly, and she blushed. Not yet had she come to that stage of experience when it would seem to her a dubious compliment—this calm assumption that her own race, her own country, meant nothing to her, were as feathers afloat upon the strong winds of passion.

Flavian watched the blush with enamored eyes. Reluctantly he turned his gaze from his fiancée, in the beauty of her admitted love and of her soft surrender, to Louise Pendleton, middle-aged, harassed, and even slightly irritated.

"If you'd like to have me try," he said, "I'll go around with Cordelia at once to see these obstinate fellow countrymen of mine. I suppose you expect me to threaten them"—he laughed—"with the Black Hand if they don't instantly accede to our demands? I'm sure you believe in that, don't you, as one of our national institutions?"

"I don't care what you threaten them with, provided you get some sense into their heads," grimly replied Louise, refusing to rise to the Black Hand bait. "Do find out where the father has gone. It will be perfectly horrible if he has gone back to Italy to attend to this affair alone, and if the authorities prevent him from returning."

"They won't," said Flavian dryly. "We have no capital punishment in Italy, you know. And escape to America comes a great deal cheaper to a poor community than imprisonment for life, when it can be managed discreetly—not too openly, you understand. Your Feretti will be back again to earn a living for his family, no matter what he does, unless," he added lightly, "the parties of the other part

prevent his return. Of course that might happen."

"Don't be so horribly cold-blooded about it!" grumbled Louise. Cordelia had slipped out of the room, saying that she would get her hat and coat and return prepared for the expedition to the Feretti tenement. "It's really not a trivial matter, this savage idea of personal vengeance."

"That is altogether a question of taste, my dear lady," he answered her. "Now, to my mind, there's something more offensive, more repugnant to the idea of civilization, in the thought of a great state, with its mighty power, exacting the blood penalty from one of its citizens for some private act than there is in a fellow citizen's attending to the affair himself. It's so brutal, it's so unequal—a whole government against one little man! One man against another—there you have adventure. Killing in hot blood, out of a justifiable hate, that is one thing; I'm quite sure God understands that, overlooks it. But killing in cold blood, with no pretense of hate—there is your true brutality. Ah, here comes Cordelia!"

Louise watched them go out of the room with a curious complexity of emotion. They were so young, so good to look upon in their bloom, they were so filled with ardor and with tenderness as they gazed into each other's eyes, that they seemed made for each other.

"Like the lovers in a chromo," she told herself irritably.

But she tried to listen to that testimony of her senses, and to still the voice within her which declared that all their likenesses were external, superficial—merely the likenesses of beauty, health, and youth—and that these were laid over a core of intrinsic, ineradicable differences.

"Poor Cordelia!" she sighed; and then, perforce, dismissed her young assistant from her mind and plunged into the mass of correspondence on her

desk. There was the reply to be written to the national recreation committee; there was the invitation to serve on the mayor's unemployment committee to be considered; there was the summons to the settlements' conference; and there, among the rest, was Gerald Babbitt's monthly letter, ending, as it had ended every month for twenty years: "I'm still waiting, Louise. You can't tire me out."

Louise reddened when she saw that. It had been very careless of her! Suppose her secretary had come upon it? Then she remembered that, after all, the words were not, to the casual eye, the accusatory declaration of patient love that they were to hers. Miss Foster would not necessarily be able to deduce from them that Mr. Gerald Babbitt, of Manitoba, donor of the Babbitt Fund, had been in the habit, once a month for the past twenty years, of inviting Louise Pendleton to leave the Cape of Good Hope, and to make her life work a philanthropy toward one—that one himself. No one in the house had ever dreamed of the romance behind the Babbitt Fund—"to be expended by the head worker at her discretion"—except that minx of a Cordelia Stimson.

Again she thought of Cordelia, and again she sighed:

"Poor Cordelia!"

CHAPTER V.

In the back tenement, Mrs. Feretti was finishing overalls. The air was full of the odor of cheap dye. She was alone. The little Maria had not yet come home from some afternoon club at the settlement, and the boys, of course, were at work. Mrs. Feretti—always thin and withered, always looking a thousand years old, although her actual age was less than wholesome, ruddy Louise Pendleton's—had new lines and hollows in her face. Her

lips moved silently as she worked, but one divined that it was not in prayer. There was no light of appeal in the black eyes glowing cavernously from under the thick black eyebrows.

She frowned when she heard a rap upon her door. Never a very neighborly woman, she had been making herself more and more a recluse since the days when she had kept Maria away from kindergarten. At first she did not answer. Perhaps it was a peddler who would think that there was no one at home, and go away again. Perhaps it was a neighbor who would make up her mind to do her visiting later. But no; the knock sounded again. Cordelia's voice followed it, fluting with a note of inquiry:

"Mrs. Feretti? Mrs. Feretti?"

Mrs. Feretti, frowning blackly, walked to the door and jerked it open. Those meddlers from the settlement had to be indulged somewhat! They were useful at times.

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Feretti?" began Cordelia, with a somewhat artificial vivacity.

She was by no means sure of Mrs. Feretti's welcome either for herself or for the young man half indistinguishable in the shadows behind her. One of Cordelia's weaknesses as a social worker was that she was always putting herself in her beneficiary's place, and saying, "But I shouldn't want any one to do this to me!"—a process paralyzing to almost all remedial action.

Mrs. Feretti murmured something that an optimist might have interpreted as a hospitable invitation to enter. At any rate, she opened the door wider by two inches, and indicated that Cordelia might come in. That young lady went on, a little more artificially vivacious than before:

"But I've brought a caller, Mrs. Feretti! A gentleman from your own country—Count Flaviano Pirenza. May he come in, also?"

The question was not out of her lips before Mrs. Feretti had repeated the name with a sharp sort of cry. She was still holding in her hand the rough blue stuff on which she had been working, but now she dropped it to the floor. Her eyes burned into the gloom of the dark stairway up which Cordelia had come.

"Pirenza? Pirenza?"

Cordelia had never heard that note in her voice before. She did not recognize it; she did not know what it meant. It seemed to her that the accent of happiness was there, of longing, but she could not tell. Bewilderedly, she looked from one to the other of her two companions. They were all within the room now, and Flavian was talking to the excited little woman. Cordelia had no idea what he was saying, or what their hostess was answering. Such a swift flow of Italian she had never heard.

"But this is wonderful!" Flavian turned to her and began to explain. His dark eyes were shining with pleasure. He pulled a chair out from beside the sink and offered it to Cordelia. "Wonderful! What do you think? You bring me to the home of one of my own people! She is of Rocca Pirenza, this Mrs. Feretti of yours. She was born there, in the very shadow of its walls. Her husband was born there. It seems he was a man of my company——"

"Your company?" Cordelia interrupted, faltering.

"Yes, in the army. Of course you knew I had served; every Italian serves in the army. I had chosen it for my profession. I had won my captaincy when"—he shrugged his shoulders and made a little gesture of surrender with the palms of his hands—"when those unfortunate private affairs of my father's of which I told you made it seem better that I should make some money! So I resigned. But this good neighbor

of mine—her husband was one of my own men! Is it not wonderful?"

He turned again toward Mrs. Feretti, and again began the swift interchange of question and answer. Again he turned to his fiancée.

"Yes, you were right about the husband—that is, about his having gone away. But he has not gone back to Italy on any such bloody errand as you dear, sentimental ladies imagined. He has gone up your own State, here, to work upon—what do you call it?—the Croton Dam—that is it. So all those terrors of yours were unnecessary, of yours and of the good Miss Pendleton's."

Cordelia looked at him still with a puzzled look. All his foreign idiosyncrasies seemed somehow accentuated in this moment of intercourse with one of his own race. He used more gestures than she had seen him use before; he was even more fluent than usual; his dark eyes and his smiling mouth and his flashing teeth all gave the effect of aiding in that torrential fluency. The explanation of Feretti's absence at which he had arrived with such speed—why, of course, it was a likely enough one! But why had Mrs. Feretti not made it before?

"I am very glad! It's very pleasant, I'm sure," said Cordelia, vividly, inanely. Then she tried to rally her forces. "Will you ask her, please," she said, "if her daughter, Eleanora, is coming over, and when?"

Again the furious jabber of the foreign language. Cordelia resolved to begin her lessons the very next day. But she felt despairingly that never, never in the world could she understand them, Flavian or any of the rest of them, if they did not talk more slowly.

"She says," Flavian at last interpreted, "that Eleanora will not come to this country at present—that she has gone to Monte Cassino, where she has an aunt who works in the hospital, and

that there Eleanora can be useful and can learn many things. Perhaps, in a year or two, she may come to America. Really, dearest, you good women have excited yourselves unnecessarily about this situation here. Accidents will happen"—the eloquent shrug seemed a little cynical now—"and sensible people realize that and make the best of them when they can. There has been no need for alarm."

"That is very nice." Cordelia repeated her banality. And she sat still upon her hard wooden chair and watched them as they talked with their infinitude of gestures, of glances, of facial changes. She watched the woman bring from some hiding place of her treasures a little handful of picture post cards, over which she and Flavian exclaimed together. Two or three of them he showed to her; they were of the country about Rocca Pirenza, of the cathedral portal in the town itself, of the armorial carvings upon the very walls of his own palace.

"Can you learn to love it, *Cordelia mia?*"

His voice softened irresistibly. He looked at her with eager appeal. Her heart was strangely thrilled. The place where men of this man's blood had lived and ruled for centuries! And now she was going there—she, Cordelia Stimson of Wheelville, Connecticut—and the current of her blood would mingle in that stream forever. Would she remain Cordelia of Wheelville even among those gorgeously colored mountains that reared their heights above Rocca Pirenza, even in the medieval stronghold with those insignia carved above the entrance? She was a little dizzy at the thought of the change. Then she looked again at Flavian, waiting for her answer. The sight of him steadied her. It would not all be new and strange and unlearnable; Flavian would be there, loving her, needing her— She smiled at him with starry

eyes as she laid the card again in his hand.

"I love it already," she told him, and she thought she spoke the truth.

When they had picked their way through the debris of the yard between the front and the rear tenement, and were back in the sunshine of busy Bleeker Street again, she gave expression to the doubt that had been growing in her mind.

"Do you suppose she was telling the truth, Flavian?"

Flavian's handsome face darkened with a look almost of anger.

"She had better tell me the truth!" he replied succinctly, accenting the "me." Cordelia regarded him interestedly.

"You don't say it as if you meant that she had better tell you the truth for her soul's sake," she suggested, a dimple lurking at the corner of her lip.

Flavian saw the dimple and his frown vanished.

"No, I did not mean only for her soul's sake," he admitted with a laugh. "As a matter of fact, I suppose I meant nothing at all. We are all over here in your highly civilized America, and a traveler to your shores may claim none of his ancient rights as seigneur over his emigrated peasants. I'm afraid I spoke rather mediævally. You have a great task before you, sweetheart—you have to make me a modern."

"But if you and she were at home in Italy, would you have any very important rights over that poor creature?" Cordelia declined, for the moment, to follow the fascinating theme of her education of Flavian.

"I mean just about that." He looked at her and laughed. "Are you afraid to come with me? I don't know that we might not be able to rake up some pleasant ancient law that would give me power of life and death over my

wife. Will you risk coming?" His eyes fairly danced into hers.

"I'll back the United States consul against all the mediæval laws in Italy," she defied him gayly. "One little United States consul who probably speaks rather poor English—to say nothing of Italian—and who may not know anything about the rules governing the wearing of dinner coats!"

"But what will you have to do with United States consuls, even if we could find one near Rocca Pirenza, which we couldn't? You'll be an Italian subject, my dear—a loyal servant of their gracious majesties! You'll be married to an Italian subject."

Cordelia stood suddenly still on the crowded sidewalk. Her face was almost comically rueful.

"Do you know," she said earnestly, "I never once thought of that? Of course I knew it, but I merely happened not to think of it! I don't like it at all."

"What is there here that you love better than you love me?" he asked her, laying her hand within his arm and starting her in motion again.

"I don't know that there is anything," Cordelia replied, pondering. "I suppose there isn't anything. Else I should stay here instead of going to Italy with you."

"I'm grateful for so much," he said haughtily.

He spoke like a man offended by a woman's reasoning about her affection for him. The touch of arrogance sat upon him not unbecomingly.

To Cordelia, that little flash of spirit meant that she had wounded him not in his pride, but in his love. She pressed his arm tenderly; she looked deeply into his eyes and murmured:

"Ah, dearest, nothing really matters, does it, except just that we love each other?"

So the sky closed again serenely over a chasm that the moment's lightning had revealed.

But by and by Cordelia spoke again of his rule at Rocca Pirenza.

"What did you mean about your power up there? Are all the people there your employees, your tenants, or what?"

"Almost everything there is mine," he answered. "There are two or three families who have come back from America and bought little places of their own that come under the jurisdiction of the town's officials. But I own all the houses and farms, practically. And—more to the purpose even—I own the village syndic. You'll have to be very, very good indeed—you'll have to obey me most carefully—if you hope to escape trouble, once I get you into my fortress!"

"But you sound very rich," protested Cordelia. "All the houses and the farms in a whole town! I never heard of such a thing."

"Wait till you see it," replied Flavian grimly. "Rocks almost as bare as the walls of your granite buildings downtown, and almost as steep! And the village is a mere handful of stone hutches. No riches there, though I admit that all my tenants hold their wretched places on terms rather advantageous to me."

He did not speak as one greatly concerned about social injustices, about the inequalities between man and man surviving from another age. He looked very gay and debonair, unmindful of the sufferings of the poor. Cordelia, her head crammed with phrases about the responsibilities of the wealthy and the educated, about the wrongs of the industrial classes, about all the things concerning which conversation at the James Winant House buzzed at every evening's dinner table, felt a chill of misgiving.

He had been very charming, of course, about the work that the settlement did among the poor Italians; he had been forever likening it to the do-

ings of saints and angels. She had taken all that as picturesque exaggeration; she had thought he understood that no mere pretty, womanly amelioration of ills, no mere aristocratic charity, no American version of Lady Bountiful, was the underlying aim of their work, but radical change. His manner now made her feel that he must have misunderstood, that they must have talked at cross-purposes. Else he could surely never wear this jaunty air of self-satisfaction while proclaiming himself one of those whom she regarded as the chief of malefactors—an absentee landlord, wringing the last cent from his tenants and indifferent to their condition.

But then he looked at her and smiled, and all her social theories were forgotten. They loved each other; they had been engaged about two hours; the world was one beautiful, shimmering bubble of happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

Cousin Susan Stimson wept and protested. She recalled to Cordelia how wise and just a man Solon had been; was not the judgment of such a one rather to be heeded than the foolish whisperings of a young girl's heart? Besides, what was Cordelia going to live upon?

Cordelia, a little pale from the strain of three days of lamentation and of Cassandralike prophecy, answered wearily that she and her husband would live upon what he had, and what he could make. She admitted that, to American eyes, what he had would not seem a princely fortune, but then—as she reminded Cousin Susie with a little smile—living was so much cheaper in Italy. Besides, he was going to make money. He had been in America studying the possibilities of wine and oil exportation—Miss Susie shuddered and drew a white ribbon upon her breast

into greater prominence—and now, knowing a good deal of the business, he was prepared to invest a certain sum in a corporation already formed in Italy. Where, Miss Susie was anxious to know, was he to obtain the money for this investment?

Cordelia's tired face reddened.

"He is going to get it from me," she replied tersely. Then, as Miss Susan Stimson's widened eyes and narrowed lips betrayed her belief that the final pitch of ignominy had been reached, Cordelia went rapidly on: "Of course you know perfectly well, Cousin Susie, that I have not been spending my income since I have been at the settlement. I hadn't been spending it before, for that matter. I hadn't even been collecting it—just allowing it to be added on to the

principal. But I didn't do that last quarter, and I shan't do it this quarter. That means that we shall have more than twenty-five thousand dollars to invest before I am married. Of course, we shan't have anything afterward—that is, after we go to Italy—but I don't feel that I am cheating at all to use this last year's income as I please, even though I know I'm about to disregard poor papa's wishes."

"Well, but how will you live on what



The way the rest of the rumor penetrated to kitchen circles was that they had been seen "huggin' and kissin' in the park."

a little investment like that yields?" Miss Susie, who was the cowardly slave of her stocks and bonds, looked with genuine agitation at Cordelia. She didn't spend five thousand dollars a year, but she would have felt herself a candidate for the almshouse had she had less than a quarter of a million put away in the safest of investments.

"Flavian is going to take a position—a job"—Cordelia corrected herself with a little smile—"with the company. He'll have his salary as well as his profits."

"Your profits," Cousin Susie could not refrain from interjecting.

Cordelia took it calmly.

"Very well," she accepted the emendation. "We shall have his salary and my profits to live upon, besides the little portion of his rental that he gets hold of himself. Really, Cousin Susie, I'm awfully disappointed that you take it like this. I have been so happy. I wanted you to like him. I still want you to like him——"

"An Italian! I never knew an Italian in my life until Antonio opened his fruit market on Main Street."

"Yes, but there've really been lots of nice ones," insisted Cordelia earnestly. "You know—Julius Cæsar and Dante and—the popes."

"The popes!" Miss Susie's manner indicated no relief at this suggestion.

"Yes," Cordelia still insisted valorously, "and Michael Angelo and Raphael and ever and ever so many more! You really must not act as if I were talking about marrying a Zulu!"

"What your poor father——" began Miss Susie, temporarily retreating from the social undesirability of a race not embraced by her visiting list, but Cordelia interrupted.

"Now, Cousin Susie, we finished with what my poor father would have felt, yesterday. We've finished with everything except how you're going to treat Flavian when he comes. He'll be here

at two-twenty-seven." Cordelia glanced at the clock solemnly ticking upon the mantelpiece of her cousin's sitting room. "It's a quarter of, now. If you aren't going to be nice to him, I shall go down to the train and tell him not to come up, and we'll both go back to New York together."

"Cordelia," exclaimed Miss Susie with an injured air, "when have you ever known me to fail in courtesy to a guest?"

Cordelia leaned back in her chair with a sigh of relief. The three-day siege of her cousin had been successful. Miss Susie departed from the sitting room with as much majesty as gray mohair permits its wearer, en route to the kitchen. She was going to supplement her order for dinner. Family feeling could go no farther.

By this time Cordelia had been engaged for nearly two months and her trousseau was well under way. She was making it quite a lavish one, trying to look ahead into the years when it would not be so easy to replenish her wardrobe. The weeks had been full of happiness; Flavian had been an ideal lover. Sometimes, in moments of detachment from the lovely drama in which she was the heroine, she was able to view him objectively, and to tell herself how ideally he played his part. In such moments she found it in her heart to pity the girls who had to put up with inarticulate American lovers, who did not know the language of poetry and would have blushed to use it even had they known it.

Very seldom, across the joy and glamour of those weeks, had the thought of any fundamental differences obtruded. When, by chance, some trifling incident would make apparent a wide divergence in their feelings or their minds, there was almost an element of piquancy afforded by the unlikeness. How dull to be engaged to a man whom one had always known,

whose tastes and ideas were as familiar to one as a brother's or a father's! Think of the awful boredom of beginning the long journey with a person whose nature would hold no surprises for one! Thus Cordelia talked to herself in self-satisfied ignorance, not knowing the surprises that even the most familiar character has in store for one who weds with it!

By and by she put on her hat and went down the familiar street toward the railroad station to meet her lover. Wheelville still slept beneath its winter coverings. Its garden bushes were swathed in straw; no hint of green broke the hard surface of its lawns. Yet there was a mild, springlike quality in the air that caressed her as she walked, and softened her heart toward her old home. Colorless and rather grim the lives behind the double-windowed houses—almost fantastic in their narrowness, some of them; yet there was some quality in them, as in this soft spring air, that seemed unspeakably dear to her at the moment.

When Flavian came through the station gates from his train, his first look was the lover's—eager, expectant, joyful. But after he had greeted her with a tumultuous little sentence or two about the three-day eternity of her absence, about his longing and his joy, it seemed to her that he fell unaccountably silent. His look, too, was serious, even harassed.

"Is there anywhere we could talk together for a little before we go to the excellent Cousin Susie's?" he asked. "There is something I have to tell you."

"The Soldiers' Park is on our way home," she told him, referring to the little green square dominated by the Soldiers' Monument. "It's warm enough to sit there for a little while, I suppose. But"—she laughed—"you won't find Cousin Susie's at all like the settlement. We'll have plenty of chance to talk there."

"Perhaps you will not wish me to come to Cousin Susie's when you have heard," he answered briefly.

She looked at him, affrighted.

"What do you mean? Is anything— Are you— Don't you—" she stammered, unable to think clearly.

"Nothing has happened to you or to me. I am the same man you left four days ago. I love you more than ever—more than I knew a man could love." His eyes confirmed the passionate earnestness of his voice.

"Then why—" began Cordelia.

"Just as soon as we come to this— what did you call it?—this Soldiers' Park of yours, I will tell you. Until we come there, ask me nothing. Only say that you love me."

"Of course I love you," replied Cordelia, almost too reasonably.

She quickened her pace and led the way to the little park almost at a running speed. They dropped into an iron bench opposite the bronze figure of the young soldier upon his granite block; it always made Cordelia think of her father, and of the story of his stalwart youth. Flavian's eyes, too, rested on it with approval. He repeated the inscription cut into the stone: "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" He turned his eyes from it abruptly.

"Cordelia," he told her, "do you know what I wish to do with the money you have put to my credit?"

A wave of color ran up Cordelia's face to the roots of her beautiful bronze hair. Then it ran down again, leaving her quite pale.

"I thought it had been settled—what we were to do with that money," she said.

"It had been settled. But I cannot use the money for that purpose now. I cannot do anything for my own comfort while one of my blood is in great danger. Cordelia, while you have been away, I have had dispatches. My

brother Benedict—my brother Benedict——” He repeated the name and broke off.

“Is Benedict ill?” Even to her own ears, Cordelia’s voice did not sound sympathetic.

“No, I will not deceive you. Benedict is not ill. But Benedict will be eternally ruined unless he can pay a very large sum of money by the end of this week.”

“I do not think I quite understand,” said Cordelia.

“I will explain it all to you. That is, I will explain as much as may be. I will attempt no palliation for Benedict. He has done something wrong; he has committed a crime. And unless he can find a large sum of money—nearly as large as that which you were prepared to invest in the business—he will be ruined, and my father’s name will be disgraced.”

Cordelia was rather ashamed to find herself thinking that it must be a particularly heinous crime that could cast any distinguishable shade upon the name of the late Count Flavian Pirenza, so effectively had he attended to soiling it himself. What she said, however, was:

“If your brother has done anything very wrong, is it not just that he should be punished for it?”

Flavian flung back his head proudly.

“It is not he alone who will be punished. It is my sister—it is I—it is you! It is all the Pirenzas that ever were, and all that ever will be. It is not Benedict’s honor that will suffer—it is the Pirenza honor. That is what I wish to save.”

“Over here,” something compelled her to say, without heat, but merely as one stating a fact, “each man is the custodian of his own honor. No one can smirch it but himself; no one can save it for him but himself. I shall not regard yours as tarnished because your brother has done wrong——”

“Over here,” he interrupted her bitterly, “you do not know the meaning of family.”

Solon Stimson’s daughter found a slow anger creeping up her body. But she restrained it and answered quietly enough:

“Perhaps that is so. We have, though, some idea of what individual duty means.”

“You mean——”

He defied her to make her meaning more clear, but she shook her head. The wave of anger receded as suddenly as it had arisen. Was she about to quarrel with Flavian, who was in trouble?

“I don’t mean anything, dearest,” she said earnestly, her hardness melting as swiftly as it had formed, “except that I want to help you. What is it your brother has done? What can we do to help him? Do you want to use the money for that? It is yours, you know, to do with as you please. Certainly”—she smiled mistily—“we shall not have our first quarrel, you and I, about money. We can wait for another six months for our marriage, and by that time we shall again have as much for investment——”

“Cordelia!” he interrupted her.

He wore the look of admiration, of almost unbelieving adoration, that he had worn the night when he had first seen her, when she had pleaded in the smoky courtroom for the pickpocket. He raised her hand to his lips; to the edification of two children rolling hoops, a nurse girl trundling a baby carriage, and one brisk matron hurrying downtown. The kissing of ladies’ hands was a custom not practiced to any extent in Wheelville, and certainly never indulged by even the most romantic in the very shadow of the Soldiers’ Monument. Before nightfall it was known throughout the town that Cordelia Stimson was engaged to some sort of a foreigner; and the way the rest of

the rumor penetrated to kitchen circles, at any rate, was that they had been seen "huggin' and kissin' in the park."

If Wheelville had been privileged to overhear the beginning of the conversation that followed the salute, it would have been even more shocked than at that foreign rite itself. For at the suggestion that their marriage should be postponed six months, Flavian broke forth into a torrent of protestation. Could she, cold-hearted, cold-blooded as she might be—could she live for another six months and not be wholly his? What tepid fluid flowed in her veins? Was there no irresistible longing in her heart, as in his, for the hour that should give them completely to each other? Of what rock or marble did she think him made that she should so calmly suggest this unspeakable thing?

Cordelia listened to the outburst, half tempestuous reproach, half violent love-making, with a divided mind. She knew that he was unreasonable, ungrateful even—but she rather liked his unreasonableness, his ingratitude. They told her, more forcibly than any words could tell, how passionately he loved her, how ardently he desired her. Her own passion and desire mounted to meet his. Of course it was absurd—she smiled the smile of elderly wisdom that young women assume when first their feeling for their lovers is tempered by a maternal indulgence—but it was a sweet absurdity. She laughed at him, and checked the flow of his speech by a question.

"What would you suggest, then?"

Rhetorically, Flavian suggested many things—that they should find some spot upon the earth's surface where money was not a requisite to human happiness; that they should drop their rank, their places in the world, and go gypsying, sleeping together under the stars, cooking meals of unexampled savor over camp fires in the heart of the woods

or by the shore of the far-sounding sea.

Cordelia, with sparkling eyes and laugh-indentured lips, regretted to inform him that she was no sort of a cook. That did not matter! He boasted his own culinary skill.

But after a while the play had to end and they had to drop rhetoric and fairy tale and come down to reality. If they used the money intended to begin Flavian's business career to get Benedict out of trouble, upon what could they marry? One could not eat one's cake and have it, too! Whereas, by waiting six months, Flavian would have done what he conceived to be his family duty—in spite of her generosity and her eager willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of love, Cordelia's voice was ever so faintly frosty at this—and yet they would be able to go on as they had planned with the growingly lucrative business.

Flavian shook his head.

"If we wait six months longer, *Cordelia mia*," he said with sudden gravity, "we shall never be married. I feel it—I know it. Believe me, I understand our situation; I am not stupid. You love me—yes. But you have been swept, as it were, into loving me. If we wait six months, what will happen? I know you, I know your people, little as I have lived among them. You will weigh and argue and balance. You will question whether it is love or infatuation that you feel. All the differences between us, which now you half enjoy, you would begin to see as stumblingblocks. Ah, my dearest, one is not forever on the crest of the wave! One goes down into the depths. I must make you irrevocably mine now, if I am to have you at all."

There was a melancholy conviction in his voice, in the dark eyes he turned upon her.

"But if that is so," faltered Cordelia with pale lips, for she was more dis-

turbed by this new Flavian, the prophet, than she had been by his amazing demand about the money, "is it not much better that we should postpone our marriage for six months? If you believe that my love for you is so slight a thing that the mere passage of a few weeks will change it, will destroy it, is it not much better that we should make the test? You would not want an unloving wife, I suppose?"

"A wife's love is a different matter," he told her, promptly, oracularly. "Ah, you are not a Catholic; you do not believe that marriage is a mystic sacrament which really makes of the twain one flesh. But even you—adorable heretic that you are—even you must have seen husbands and wives growing more and more like to each other every year. Do you think that the likeness would have come had they remained merely betrothed—two persons, with two homes, with two sets of interests, two lives? No, my beloved, marry me and I will engage to make you indissolubly mine. Once I have taught you all the meaning of love, I will hold you against the world! But put me off —" He threw out his hands in a gesture of surrender to chance, and shrugged his facile shoulders.

"Besides," he added, with a sudden rush of color to his brown face, "I could not dream of using the money for Benedict unless it were my wife's. Imagine! I take this money; I cable it to my lawyer in Naples; he rescues my brother from his predicament; you and I wait, you with questionings, misgivings; and at the end of six months you tell me, sadly, that it cannot be! A pretty situation for me, is it not? No, Cordelia, we cannot wait."

Cordelia, with her slower mind, with her inability to leap from thought to thought and from emotion to emotion, tried conscientiously to follow his reasoning, to understand his scruples. She found herself bewildered by what

seemed to her the contradictory qualities of his pride. But she desired to meet him upon his own ground. That, she told herself, was love—to put oneself aside, to try, with all the power and imagination one could summon, to enter into the mind and the heart of a beloved one. Suddenly her grave, earnest, troubled face was brightened by a gleam of inspiration.

"Flavian! What geese we are! We could be married to-morrow if we wanted to—"

"If we wanted to!" echoed Flavian fervently.

"And still draw my income, as long as we stayed in this country. How stupid not to have remembered that! Surely"—she looked anxiously at his suddenly clouded face—"you wouldn't mind staying here at least long enough to regain what we are going to give up to your brother?"

"I am an unreasonable beast," he admitted ruefully. "But, you see, I want to get you home—I want to get you to Italy. Oh, I am utterly selfish, I acknowledge it, sweetheart! You see, as long as we stay here, it is I who am the stranger; it is my ways that are queer and outlandish; it is my temperament that is alien. Over there, it will be you. Over there, you will not be forever comparing me, weighing me in the balances of your mind—" He sighed. "But you are right; of course that is the thing to do. Oh, Cordelia, if the time should ever come when you would regret all these sacrifices you make for me! If the time should ever come when you would think you did ill to give up your fortune and your kinsfolk and all your tranquil way of life to follow a needy adventurer! I couldn't live through that, Cordelia!"

He spoke with intensity, with a vibrant note of sincerity. Cordelia's throat tightened upon a sob, her eyes were full of tears, as she listened to him.

"The hour will never come, dearest," she answered him. "Oh, Flavian, I can't talk about it as you do, but I love you, I love you!"

And then, half frightened at what she felt—or at her expression of it—she laughed and rose to her feet.

"Cousin Susie will think we have been run over by an automobile, both of us," she said. "That's Cousin Susie's favorite nightmare. She's still driving a fat little cob, and says what was good enough for her father is good enough for her. Come, let's go on."

CHAPTER VII.

By the time Cordelia and Flavian returned, Cousin Susie had exchanged her gray mohair for a lavender brocade ornamented with point lace. She had also exchanged her iron-gray morning "front" for the newer, silvery-gray dress "front" that matched her hair of the present date. An infinitesimal piece of lace, ornamented with a lavender bow, deftly hid the junction between the false and the true on Miss Susie's head and gave her an air of antique elegance. There was a flush in the wrinkled hollows of her cheeks. Cordelia thought it all due to the excitement of meeting Flavian. But almost immediately her relative undeceived her.

"My sisters, Mr. Pirenza," said Cousin Susie formally, "are sorry not to be here to greet you at once. But this is the day when our State branch of the Daughters of the Revolution meets at Hartford, and Marian is secretary, and Letitia treasurer, of our local chapter here in Wheelville. You can see that neither of them could be absent. But they will have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow upon their return. Cordelia, my dear, the most amazing thing has happened! Wonders never cease! It never rains but it pours! Here we go on for months and years at a time without ever laying eyes upon

a foreigner—I mean the sort of foreigner one would be likely to know, you understand. Of course, in all the mills and at the news stands——"

"Yes, yes, Cousin Susie," Cordelia interrupted hastily. "But what has happened?"

"As I was telling you," said Cousin Susie severely, "after going on like that for years, here to-day come not only this gentleman whom you are going to marry—Mr.——"

"Count Pirenza," interrupted Cordelia mischievously. She knew her Cousin Susie. But Cousin Susie did not display the expected excitement.

"But also your aunt, your Aunt Elizabeth! The baroness! The Baroness de Morny et Revelle!" Cousin Susie rolled the title out with considerable sonorous satisfaction. "My own second cousin, Cordelia's aunt, her father's own sister——"

"Why, Cousin Susie, do you really mean it? Is Aunt Elizabeth in this country after so many years? How perfectly thrilling! What do you suppose she means to do?"

"I suppose," said Miss Susie, rather pointedly, "that she wishes to die in her own country. She must certainly be thinking of her latter end. She was ten years older than I, and I am sixty-five. And she is not only in this country, but she will be in Wheelville, in this very house, to-night. Here, read it, child."

Miss Susie had been exploring the recesses of a pigeonhole in a Sheraton desk while she talked, and, drawing out a telegram, she handed it to Cordelia. Cordelia spread it out and read aloud:

"NEW YORK, March 23, 1912.

"Arrive Wheelville six-thirty to-night. Will stay with you if convenient.

"ELIZABETH STIMSON MORNAY."

"So I shall have the pleasure of seeing the other lady of your house who was not afraid to marry a foreigner!"

Flavian laughed amusedly. "That is delightful! But I hope she will not have any regrets to communicate to you."

"Well, she hasn't been sufficiently unhappy abroad to come back to her own country since before I was born," said Cordelia. "So I don't think that I could believe in her unhappiness over there, even if she should pretend any."

"Then you haven't seen her either? It will be a general introduction."

"Elizabeth was considered quite a beauty as a girl," announced Miss Susie, taking her place with much state behind the tea table, to which a maid was bringing a tray set forth with softly shimmering, graceful old Georgian silver. "You will want a cup of tea after your journey, Count Pirenza."

"Only Mr. Pirenza, while I'm in this country, Miss Stimson, if you please. Some day I hope we shall be done with titles in Italy, too. There is more dignity in your democratic equality than in all our pretensions of difference, to my mind. Two lumps, if you please, and lots of cream."

Cordelia demurely repressed a smile. She could almost see Cousin Susie thaw under the warming influence of this declaration of democracy from one who really had a title, if he chose to use it. How clever Flavian was! And how charming his manners! Already his slight touch of foreign punctiliousness, merely an added graciousness in him and nothing artificial, stilted, or strange, had won Cousin Susie's susceptible heart.

The arrival of the Baroness Elizabeth was announced through the house by a great uproar. The fat cob, Cordelia knew, had been requisitioned for the station, but apparently had proved insufficient for transporting all of the baroness' belongings. A taxi drew up behind it from which was discharged a maid, a half dozen valises, a Pekinese, and a parrot in a cage. From Miss

Susie's coupé the baroness was assisted by her secretary, a young man whose presence Miss Susie immediately felt to be threatening to the moral reputation of her household. Besides, where was she going to put him up? A cot could be arranged in Elizabeth's dressing room for the maid, even though the telegram had made no mention of such an appendage. But as for the young man, what was she to do with him?

"Oh, Jacques can go back and stay at the hotel," said the Baroness de Morny et Ravelle easily, when it was finally borne in upon her that her retinue was inconveniently large. "Is it the same abominable hole that it used to be, the Mansion House? Oh, well, no matter. He can stand it."

She was a handsome old lady still, tall and straight as her brother had been until his death; as her cousin Susie was now; as her niece Cordelia would be fifty years from now. Elizabeth looked at Susie congratulatorily, while Susie paused in her doorway to make sure that she was quite comfortable.

"We all have good figures, we Stimsons," she said complacently. "We don't run to fat, and we always hold our heads up. But why the false front, Susie, and why, oh, why, the lace cap?"

Even as the baroness put the flippant question, her maid was busily engaged in removing from her own head sundry artificialities—a henna-red switch, two or three puffs to match, and a sort of wire arrangement for distending the whole. Susie, who had always considered her "fronts" as quite justifiable, though she would never have dreamed of mentioning them—and indeed they deceived no one—felt indignantly horrified at the bold and brazen artifice of her cousin. The idea of those masses of henna red above that wrinkled, furrowed, keen old face! It was disgusting! It was horrible! But the only verbal reply she made to the baroness' gibe was:

"I try to dress inconspicuously, as be- seems my years."

"Your years! Why, you're a mere infant yet. You're ten years younger than I am, aren't you? I thought so. Why, at your age I was still having affairs. And I dare say you haven't had one for twenty years!"

"I never had an affair," declared Miss Susie vigorously, blushing at the imputation. "But of course you're joking."

"Joking? Not a bit of it. There's nothing like a flirtation—a good, hot flirtation—as a rejuvenator. But American women don't know how to live, especially New England women. So Solon's girl is going to toss away a fortune for the sake of getting away from her dear native land!" She threw her head back and laughed. "What a joke on Solon! I'd give a thousand dollars to see his face when he hears the news in heaven or wherever he may be. Serves him right! She must have spirit. And the young man is staying here, you say? I must dress to do him honor. Margot"—she turned to her maid, bent busily over a trunk in one corner of the room—"put out my black and apple green. And my emeralds. We must impress this amazing, this unbelievable, Italian who actually marries for love and not for money."

When she was arrayed in the black and green—she might better have called it green and black—Susie, blushing, left the room. To see an old woman like that with her corsage cut almost to her waist in the back and disgracefully, hideously, low in front! To be sure, the flesh of her arms, shoulders, and bosom was still remarkably fair and firm. But the dreadful, withered throat, the wrinkled, hollowed face—they were like ruins, to Susie's way of thinking. And even if modesty had not forbidden that dinner dress, a decent regard for the æsthetic sensibili-

ties of others should have done so! Her own lavender brocade and her point lace came well up under her ears. If Elizabeth should stay long and should exhibit herself to Wheelville's critical eye in all her flaunting, brazen display of faded, battered charms, Susie felt that the Stimson reputation, even in Wheelville, must suffer. And what would that extremely nice young Italian think of them? Such a pleasant young man, so deferential, so truly courteous, so amiable, so simple in spite of his title! He would probably consider Cordelia's aunt an immoral person; Susie rather suspected that she was, indeed! It was too bad! Why couldn't Elizabeth have timed her visit otherwise?

However, as it happened, Elizabeth had timed her visit in a way that Flavian Pirenza had reason to recall with gratitude as long as he lived.

He was not shocked, as Miss Susie had feared, when, coming into the drawing-room before dinner, he first encountered the amazing baroness. Flavian had already had experience of elderly dames of the great world who had declined to listen to the hint of age.

He greeted his prospective wife's aunt with something less of deference than he had given Miss Susie, but with something more of camaraderie. Elizabeth was charmed with him. By the time Cordelia came down, she was tapping him on the arm with her fan of green ostrich feathers and mother-of-pearl. She was dropping into French in her conversation with him, and both of them were enjoying whatever she had to say in that language. Susie was quite convinced that it was something that ought not to be said in any tongue and that could not be said in English.

Cordelia looked very lovely as she entered. There was an undulating grace about all her movements, and love, the incomparable beautifier, had given a touch of ethereal radiance to her face.

There was something queenlike about the massing of her bronze hair above her broad white brow. Her dress, shimmering and silvery, became her extraordinarily. Her aunt surveyed her with satisfied eyes.

"Come here and kiss me, you beauty, you!" she commanded.

Blushing, Cordelia obeyed. When she had removed her fresh young lips from the carefully carmined surface of the baroness' cheek, the latter lady turned to Susie and remarked:

"She's exactly what I was at her age."

"Well, I hope she won't be exactly what you are at your age," answered Susie with unexpected asperity. "People grow old very differently in France from anywhere else in the world, I think."

"You're forgetting that Cordelia will be living abroad, too," retorted the baroness sharply. "Thank Heaven, she isn't going to stay here and do what you American women do—dry up—wither!"

It was Flavian who struck in to save the situation by some general observation about American women. Elizabeth made Cordelia sit beside her on the sofa. She patted her hand affectionately and commended her choice of a husband. Every now and then, both while they waited for dinner and during that meal and afterward, she burst out into a chuckle. It was too amusing, she declared, to think of her stupid brother and the way in which fate had dealt with his prejudice. She described, for Flavian's benefit, with a good deal of shrewish humor, that long-buried affair with Helena Petrovna.

Cordelia, who had never heard the story—children seldom hear the true romances of their parents' lives—blushed to her ears in shame and indignation. She hated the Russian woman who had turned to bitterness all the friendly confidence of that boy

of long ago; she hated scarcely less this harsh and terrible old woman who was making a mocking anecdote out of that youthful tragedy of disillusion. How could this Aunt Elizabeth be of the race of Solon Stimson and of gentle Susie and her sisters? She was vain, she was foolish, she was vulgar, she was cruel—this old woman! What had made her so?

Meantime, Elizabeth was enlightening them as to what had brought her home. She was dissatisfied with the reports of her American agents on some of her American investments; it appeared that there were good business brains beneath the henna-dyed puffs and curls. She laughed derisively, recalling her brother's invincible belief that she was doomed to poverty if she married abroad. Why, her husband had had remarkable sagacity—everything that he had touched he had doubled, trebled, quadrupled, in value! They would have been rich, even had Solon succeeded in that kindly little fraternal plan of his and induced her father to do her out of all her own inheritance. However, he hadn't succeeded. A smoldering fire of resentment seemed to spring into sudden flame as she recalled that brotherly effort of Solon's. Then she recalled again how time was dealing with his prejudices, and her anger evaporated in merriment. She called Cordelia to her and kissed her again out of pure gratification. She insisted upon regarding the approaching marriage chiefly as a joke on Solon.

The next morning the baroness, scorning the coupé and the cob, ordered the town's one public limousine and proceeded to the Wheelville First National Bank, where she was received with the honor due to her investments and without regard to the eccentricities of her appearance. She was, without a doubt, a remarkable figure, in a sweeping costume of royal purple velvet, leopard-skin furs, and a Gainsborough

hat loaded with purple plumes. She carried her Pekinese under one arm, and was followed by the young man whom 'Wheelville' never knew by any other name than "Jacques," bearing a small, shiny black valise. She was closeted with the bank officials for two or three hours; and when she came out, with the president and treasurer attending her to the very door, she stood for a few minutes as if undetermined what to do next.

"Is old Lawyer Creesy still living?" she suddenly demanded, swinging around toward the bank president.

He was her junior by about twenty years, son of the man with whom she had had her business transactions when last she had been in America; but he had not her quickness of movement, of recovery and balance. Her elbow, crooked to hold the little dog, gave him a backward shove as she turned. It was a perceptible second before he had recovered his position. He laughed at his own awkwardness.

"You make me ashamed of myself, baroness," he said. "How like you are to your brother, Colonel Stimson! He was the straightest, most active, old gentleman I have ever seen. You were asking about old Lawyer Creesy. No, he passed away the winter before last; his son is his successor. A very satisfactory attorney you'll find him if you happen to have any legal business on hand. He looks after us, here at the bank, in our law matters." Then he looked at her a little more sharply, though still with the air of smiling admiration. "You were considerably the colonel's junior, were you not, baroness, if I may make so bold?"

"I was two years older than Solon," declared the baroness de Morny et Revelle with brusque candor. "I am seventy-six. But we do wear well, we Stimsons. I've been told that I don't look much over fifty."

The president bowed and justified

that acquiescent gesture to his New England conscience by telling it that he had not said anything.

She trailed her velvet down the bank's steps and across the sidewalk to the car.

"You know where Lawyer Creesy's office is?" she asked the waiting chauffeur. He said that he did. "Then drive me there," she commanded. She turned to Jacques, hovering at her elbow with the black bag and said: "I shan't need you again to-day. Amuse yourself, if you can find amusement in Wheelville! I never could."

The baroness was closeted with the youthful Creesy—he was only forty-nine—for about an hour, and he came out to her automobile with her when she departed from his office. He looked very grave; she looked very much amused. When she was comfortably disposed among her rugs again, she leaned out and shook hands with him.

"I'm sorry your father's not alive," she told him. "He would have enjoyed the joke. Dear me, there are so few people left who knew Solon and who would appreciate the situation in its funniness. Do you believe in immortality? I do. And so I believe that Solon himself knows the joke. He always hated to be ridiculous; how he will hate this! Well, if he doesn't know how absurd he has been made"—the purple ostrich plumes vibrated vehemently—"he'll know it the very instant I arrive where he is."

"That will be a long day yet, baroness," said Lawyer Creesy, with an untutored enjoyment of the title. "A long day! You'll have plenty of opportunity to change your mind, if it should chance that you wish to. *Bon voyage.*"

"*Bon voyage*" was all of Mr. Creesy's French, and he thought it a delicate attention to the country of the baroness' adoption to strain meanings a little and use it now. She smiled, but not unkindly, and nodded.

"The same to you," she said.

The chauffeur asked her whither he should drive next, and after an absent-minded pause, as if she had not heard him, she recalled her wandering wits.

"Oh, home. I mean to Miss Stimson's."

They made the brief journey to Miss Susie's, but when the car door was opened, the baroness made no movement toward getting out. The little dog was whimpering curiously. The chauffeur peered in. There was something the matter with his passenger; he did not know what. He dashed across the street to Doctor Goercke's, and then back again and up Miss Susie's lawn. Miss Susie came out upon her dignified front porch to inquire into the cause of the baroness' delay. She did not understand what the boy was saying, but it frightened her and she ran down to the street, arriving almost simultaneously with the doctor. Cordelia and Flavian, who had been for a walk among the hills outside the little city, were swinging along the sidewalk on their way home to luncheon. They reached the automobile just as Doctor Goercke turned around from his brief examination.

"She's had a stroke," he announced. "We must have her moved. I can't say anything yet."

But by the time they had moved her, he was able to make a perfectly definite statement. Baroness de Morney et Revell was dead. Cousin Susie had been quite right in opining that Elizabeth Stimson had come home to die in her own country.

By nightfall every one in Wheelville knew that, just before her death, the baroness had executed a new will by which she had divided five hundred thousand dollars in two parts, one to go to her dear niece Cordelia Stimson and one to Cordelia Stimson's fiancé. "In token of the affectionate esteem in

which I always held my brother Solon," the will read.

Mr. Creesy reported that the lady had chuckled apoplectically over the insertion of that phrase, and that he had really been afraid at the moment that she would choke to death.

Cordelia, hearing the news, looked with dazed, bewildered eyes at Flavian. Of course it was idle to pretend grief for the death of this capricious old woman whom she had never known and whom she had quite hated the night before. But death was disquieting, shocking, and the thought of profiting by death was strangely repugnant to her.

Flavian had no such feeling. He could scarcely compose his features to a decent expression of solemnity, even during the days of conventional mourning before the baroness was laid to rest among her forbears.

"I have always believed in fairy tales," he told Cordelia, "and now see! I have my golden princess out of my fairy tale, and the witch—who seemed so wicked, but who was really a kind, godmotherly sort of fairy—has given me the boxful of pearls and rubies and diamonds to deck my princess, and the ivory palace in which to house her. Why shouldn't we have the money? She's left plenty, I understand, for all those French connections of her husband's. She had no children, and I don't doubt that all she turned back to you and me came originally from your grandfather's fortune. I haven't a single scruple, Cordelia. On the contrary, I'm the happiest man in the world, and I'll burn candles to her forever! And now we'll be married next week, and we'll sail for home."

CHAPTER VIII.

The big assembly hall in the James Winant House was hung with Southern smilax and with pink roses until the walls were scarcely discernible. The

stage on which the children of the neighborhood were wont to give their plays was a high green bank of laurel. It made a very effective background for the bridal party.

Cordelia had wanted to be married in great simplicity; perhaps by an alderman at city hall when she and Flavian presented themselves there to take out their marriage license. But Louise Pendleton had overruled that desire. No, if a favorite worker at the settlement was going to be guilty of the disloyalty of leaving, let her at least offer some slight compensation for her defection by making the occasion of her departure a gala day for the neighborhood. Cordelia had yielded. The assembly hall would hold almost as many guests as a church; and afterward, in the big rooms above, she could receive, like any conventional bride.

Not quite like any conventional bride, however. For, among the frock-coated and the chiffon-gowned from uptown and up State and Wheelville, there were others. Tears sprang to her eyes to observe how many of the men of the neighborhood, who, she had thought, were scarcely aware of her existence, had taken an hour off at noon that they might pass through the rooms with their tired, hard-working wives and give her a "God bless you." And all the girls of all the clubs in which she had worked had managed to come, and ever and ever so many of the youths from the boys' clubs.

Yes, yes, indeed, she was telling Mrs. King from across the street, she would remember her; she would come back often and often to see her, and she would hope every time to find them happier and more prosperous. Then she turned with a little cry to Flavian, standing beside her, flushed, triumphant, half impatient of all that delayed them,

half proud of all the love that she had won.

"See!" she said.

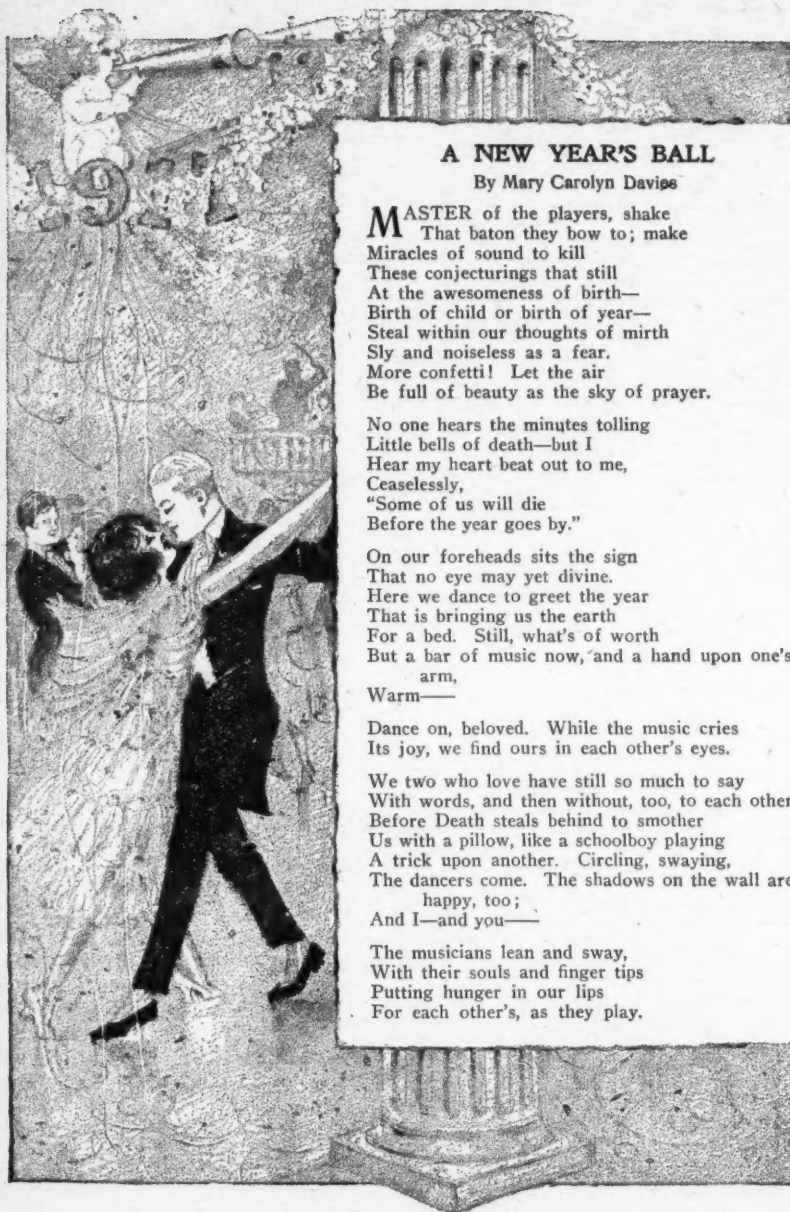
It was a procession of the tiniest children of all that entered now, scrubbed within an inch of their lives, stiffly starched, amazing as to hair ribbons and neckties. It was the kindergarten class, Maria Feretti at its head. Maria held a bouquet almost as large as herself—a wonderful bouquet of many colors. She presented it speechlessly to Cordelia, while behind her her mates whispered and hissed reminders to her of the words she was to utter. But stage fright completely overcame Maria.

"It's all right, children," Cordelia assured them, holding the mound of pink and red and yellow against the shimmering white of her satin and lace. "It doesn't matter that Maria has forgotten what to say. I know what you all mean. You mean that you love me, and that you hope I'll be very, very happy."

She stooped and planted a kiss upon Maria's mute little lips. Then she had to kiss the whole procession of thirty. And then at last she was released to change her clothes, and to weep for a moment in Louise Pendleton's arms, and to come down the stairway and out onto the crowded street, where the children were loitering to see her pass. As the door of the limousine closed upon her and Flavian, she looked back.

"Why, Flavian! How queer! I'm sure I saw Mrs. Feretti there, with Maria—why—shaking her fist toward us! It couldn't be!" She turned with a look of inquiry toward her husband.

"Nonsense! She was warding off the evil eye or something of that sort. Oh, Cordelia, forget them all! I've been so jealous of them this last hour! Give me your thoughts, your heart!"



A NEW YEAR'S BALL

By Mary Carolyn Davies

MASTER of the players, shake
That baton they bow to; make
Miracles of sound to kill
These conjecturings that still
At the awesomeness of birth—
Birth of child or birth of year—
Steal within our thoughts of mirth
Sly and noiseless as a fear.
More confetti! Let the air
Be full of beauty as the sky of prayer.

No one hears the minutes tolling
Little bells of death—but I
Hear my heart beat out to me,
Ceaselessly,
"Some of us will die
Before the year goes by."

On our foreheads sits the sign
That no eye may yet divine.
Here we dance to greet the year
That is bringing us the earth
For a bed. Still, what's of worth
But a bar of music now, and a hand upon one's
arm,
Warm—

Dance on, beloved. While the music cries
Its joy, we find ours in each other's eyes.

We two who love have still so much to say
With words, and then without, too, to each other
Before Death steals behind to smother
Us with a pillow, like a schoolboy playing
A trick upon another. Circling, swaying,
The dancers come. The shadows on the wall are
happy, too;
And I—and you—

The musicians lean and sway,
With their souls and finger tips
Putting hunger in our lips
For each other's, as they play.

Some of us will die
Before the year goes by.
Perhaps those two, whose hearts are in their
faces,

Who yearn to kiss, but rather think this place is
Too public, for a kiss that means to be,
Not one born carelessly.
And so they whirl the closer, each to each,
When a chord's crashing gives them leave, and
speech

Is in their eyes and finger tips and shoulders,
Speech that is foreign tongue to most beholders,
But mother tongue to them. We love, we know!
Their joy is in the swing of a room's corner;
They lost the step, a half a bar ago,
That they might stand, all blamelessly,
Their arms about each other—so.
Their faces glow.

Still, if she dies, how long will that boy mourn
her?

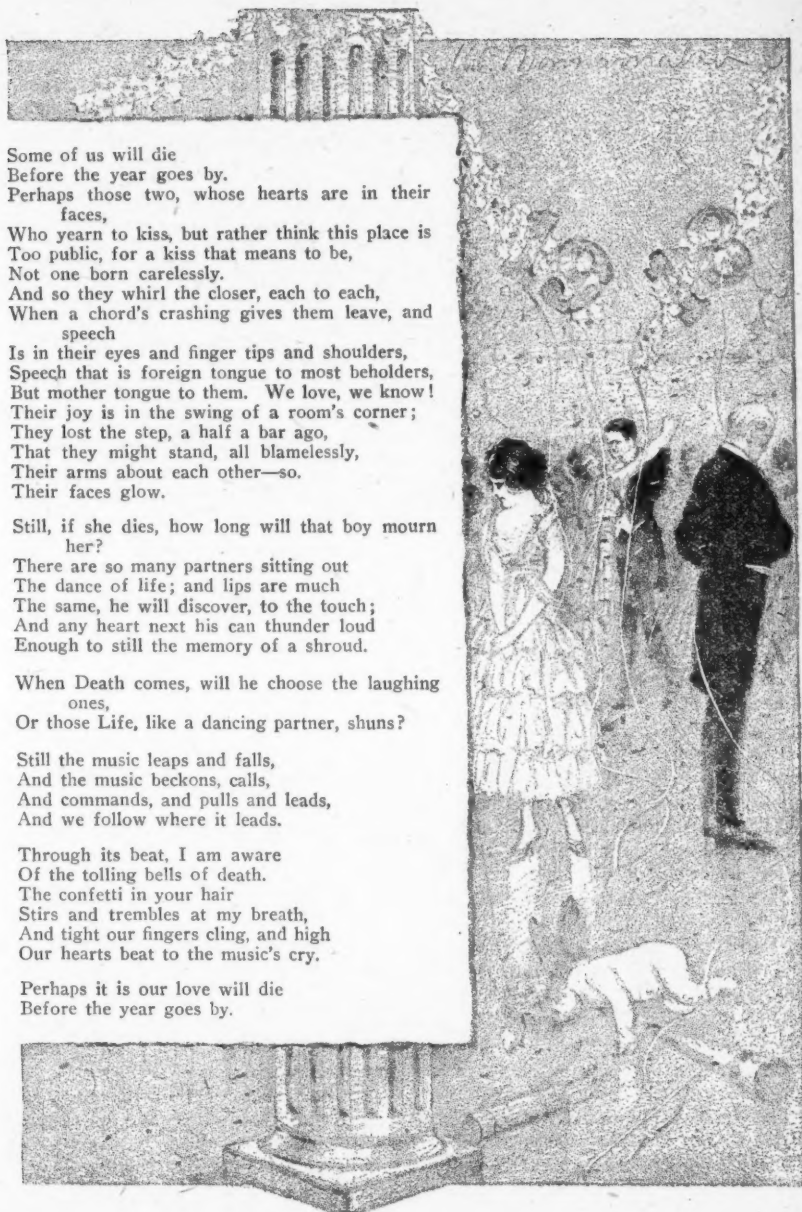
There are so many partners sitting out
The dance of life; and lips are much
The same, he will discover, to the touch;
And any heart next his can thunder loud
Enough to still the memory of a shroud.

When Death comes, will he choose the laughing
ones,
Or those Life, like a dancing partner, shuns?

Still the music leaps and falls,
And the music beckons, calls,
And commands, and pulls and leads,
And we follow where it leads.

Through its beat, I am aware
Of the tolling bells of death.
The confetti in your hair
Stirs and trembles at my breath,
And tight our fingers cling, and high
Our hearts beat to the music's cry.

Perhaps it is our love will die
Before the year goes by.



True Love

A STORY OF HOME

By Anne Spottswood Young

Author of "The Hotel Baby," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

How could a girl brought up like Genevieve Drew run away with a man like Truesdale Ellis? Read the story for an understanding of her young heart.

A TWO-PART STORY. PART II.

CRUNKETY-CRUNCH!" sang the wheels of the train, with maddening regularity, seeming to have power to drown the runaway girl's thoughts for the moment, as she stood on the platform leaning against the door, gazing out into a moonlit summer world that looked suddenly cold and chill as if touched with frost.

Truesdale stood with his back to her on the opposite platform, chatting with the conductor. The porter had taken her suit case into the car, and she knew that she was expected to follow him; knew that Truesdale was troubled, if not irritated, that she had not disappeared at once. If he would give her just one more word of encouragement, if she could feel his arms about her for a few brief seconds, she would surely be brave again, and this unexpected fright and depression would lift.

She stole a surreptitious glance at him as he took off his hat and flung back his hair with the quick, characteristic movement she knew and loved. How lightly and gayly he talked! How blithely his laughter rang out! How marvelously bright his eyes were tonight! Never had he seemed so dear, so lovable, so near—and yet so infinitely far away! He had told her that twenty minutes would not be long, but they stretched before her like an eternity. Love is the most wonderful thing in

the world, he had said, but why had he not warned her that giving up everything else was the hardest thing in the world? Then she would have been somewhat prepared for this appalling cloud of homesickness.

The violent trembling of her knees was over, but her hands still shook, and she leaned more heavily against the door to steady herself. The veil smothered her. Faint and ill, she lifted it and looked out again, but shivered apprehensively after one glance at a gloomy patch of woodland through which the moonlight did not filter. A finger touched her sleeve. She started guiltily, instantly lowering the dark chiffon, but it was only the porter bowing deferentially, telling her the berths were made up, in case she wished to retire.

"Oh—oh, yes! Thank you!" she replied, her eyes resting on Truesdale, for the conductor had at last left him, and he lingered, calling:

"Where's the smoker, porter?"

Receiving a prompt response, he still waited; and as if in answer to Genevieve's ardent wish, the porter also disappeared, leaving them alone, facing one another, for a few seconds.

He must give her a word! Swaying with the motion of the train, unconsciously dramatic, she held out an entreating hand to him. Now he would take his chance, come to her, speak to

her! He would know instinctively how she felt. But he only smiled, shook his head, placed his finger on his lips, turned, and was gone!

Had her face not been shadowed by the veil, he would have seen instantly that she was on the verge of a dangerous nervous breakdown which he could have prevented by a few loving words of assurance, and he would have risked much to give her that sustinment. As it was, he caught only the pleading love in her gesture, not the fear, the terror of the unknown; and, responding to the love alone, his smile had been wonderfully bright, lighting his whole face. In his countenance she read swiftly passion, longing, eagerness, warning, and, above all, undoubted admiration of her, that slim, graceful, tastefully gowned figure before him, a precious flower stolen from a home garden.

Here was a girl guarded, supposedly, from every danger, surrounded by brooding care, watched over, prayed over, loved by devoted hearts that had merely failed to see in time that the child had grown to be a woman, with only childish toy weapons in her hands to cope with new and gigantic emotions. The gloriously right being so perplexingly mingled with the fatally wrong, what wonder that, blinded and dazzled by first love, this frail girl should have been swept off her feet by forces that all too often deceive older and wiser ones.

That smile from Truesdale, bright as it had been, chilled her indefinably and failed to give her the comfort she needed. The porter appeared again, this time a little curious, and she turned and entered the car, following him to the section nearest the entrance, climbing into the berth, and drawing the heavy green curtains together after her. The small electric globes were turned on, and she threw back her veil and took one glance at her face in the narrow mirror. It gazed back at her ut-

terly colorless, and unfamiliar to her startled eyes. Hastily pushing the metal covers up over the lights, she found herself in a welcome half darkness and, leaning forward, raised the blinds.

In making its long detour, the train would pass Hill House, and she could see again the home she was leaving. She was just in time. There it was, distinctly clear against the sky. Her father was sleeping in that corner room on the second floor at this moment, while every revolution of the inexorable wheels carried her farther away; his door was open as always, lest she, across the hallway, should be frightened and need his care in the night. Need his care? Frightened? She was frightened now, with a terror the more alarming because it was still vague.

Across the car a sonorous sleeper proclaimed with monotonous regularity his oblivion to earthly cares. The porter brushed past her section, the curtains bulging inward as he did so. He was quietly humming to himself, with that rich pathos of tone which many of his race possess. Above the rush of the train, the subdued whir of the wheels, she caught the fragment of a hymn. But why that song of all others? Only a few bars reached her, but they were enough to set her brain awlirl with the words she had sung with her father a score of times, carrying a sweet, high soprano to his tenor—his favorite song and hers:

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold—

She huddled close to the windows. The house was gone. Again she looked out into a bleak, gloomy stretch of woodland. She pressed her hands over her ears, but as distinctly as if he were close beside her, she seemed to hear her father's voice:

"Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care—"

A chill shook her from head to foot.



Why had everything seemed so wonderfully right out there in the garden, his arms around her, his kisses upon her lips? Why did everything seem wrong now?

Truesdale would come to her, would speak to her, would comfort her, after they left Lewiston, but to her amazement the thought of Truesdale's voice brought no soothing. Homesickness filled her whole horizon, just as love had filled it earlier in the evening. It was her father she wanted! She wanted to hear his voice—at once—now—this moment! Tearless, wide-eyed, every nerve aquiver, she gazed out into the night, trying to assure herself that she had nothing to fear. And then, startlingly, came Gordon's words:

"What do you know about this fellow Ellis?"

What *did* she know? Late, now, to think of that! Where was she going? West, to be sure, but where? When and where were they to be married? What was the first stop on the morrow? Why had she not asked more questions? Why had everything seemed so wonderfully right out there in the garden, his arms around her, his kisses upon her lips? Why did everything seem wrong now? Was it the mere memory of the hymn, or was it some new,

strange awakening in her own heart, the result of training, inheritance, ancestral gifts of sound judgment, correct reasoning powers, brought suddenly to a focus in a cruelly bright, revealing vision, as she forced herself to recall Truesdale's exact words, uninfluenced by his presence?

"Love that is, not great enough to leave everything behind is not great at all." That was not true! Girls married, of course, and went away to other homes, but they came back to visit. Parents planned for them afterward, rejoiced in their joy, sorrowed in their sorrow.

"Nothing in the world is great but love." Perhaps—but what was love? And there were other kinds of love besides that of man for woman, of woman for man. She hadn't time to think it all out clearly, but something was wrong with Truesdale's reasoning.

"This love for your parents is greater on your side than on theirs." Her mind shut resolutely down like a trap on that thought. To consider this now would result in such overwhelming homesickness that it would amount to prostration.

Crunkety-crunch! Crunkety-crunch! On swept the train toward Lewiston.

She couldn't be here! She was safe at home! She had but to put out her hand and touch the pretty kimono, thrust her feet into dainty slippers, and run across the hall to speak to her father. Her groping hand touched her suit case, and she shrank away from it. In that traveling bag, not across her bed at home, lay the radiant rose gown and the slippers to match, her mother's last birthday gift to her.

Her mother! She was coming home to-morrow—no, to-day, for it was after midnight now. Flowers were ordered; little welcoming gifts, made by her and Aunt Polly, were in readiness. She and her father, as a surprise, had had her mother's rooms done over in her favor-

ite soft blue shades; and father, in reckless extravagance, had bought a wonderful sapphire drop hung on a slender gold chain, his only excuse being that it was the color of mother's eyes. How prettily and happily and tearfully she would scold at this purchase, after all the long hospital expense! How laughingly they had both agreed that it was really too much to spend just now, as they had bent above it in an ecstasy of admiration—but *wouldn't* mother love it? Would she love it with her little girl gone?

Gone? Not till that moment did the full realization come to her that in running away she would be gone! Her mother's longed-for return was close at hand, and she wouldn't be there to welcome her! Her father's door stood open, and she couldn't run to him for help and comfort! And why was she running off? What reasonable request in all her life had ever been denied her? Why had she not trusted a love that had never failed her, a love that was true, true to its foundations?

Her fingers touched the electric bell and she straightened up as if shocked into action. She would ring for the porter and send for Truesdale. They would get off at Lewiston and go back. Business must wait a few days. She would tell him that she was homesick, and surely he would grant the first favor she asked of him. She never dreamed that this request was the one and only one he would not grant, or suspected that he would not even come at her bidding till after the train had left Lewiston. She felt for the bell again, but before she rang, her hand was stayed by a low conversation between two conductors, who had paused near the stateroom door, so close to her section that she could have touched them by reaching out her hand.

"Truesdale Ellis is on board. Remember him?"

An indulgent laugh followed.

"Sure! An attractive scamp! How is he getting along?"

"Financially? First rate. Making money hand over fist, they say, for himself and for his firm. Smart as a whip, you know, and straight as a die in business. No one can touch him there. Pleasantest fellow on a trip I ever came across. By the way, he was delayed in getting accommodations, he says. Can you fix him up with a state-room?"

"Yes, this one is empty," came the answer, followed by a murmuring discussion over a ticket. Then—

"Well, I'll be glad to see Ellis again. He used to go over this route a good deal. Is he walking the straight and narrow since his marriage? Or is he just as fond of a pretty face as ever?"

"Search me! His wife's a pretty woman. Ever see her? No? His two kids are good looking, too. He's a queer combination. Remarkably fond of children. I've seen him entertain fretful youngsters on the train by the hour. They say his wife's devoted to him. That's the trouble! They *all* love him! Some gay dog! Hello! We're getting into Lewiston!"

"Conductor!"

It was a girl's voice, low, tense, calm—far too calm. The little passenger who had boarded the train at Humphreys no longer veiled her face. She was standing in the aisle, white as chalk under the dim lamps, but neither man noted anything amiss. One conductor hastened past her with a brief glance, but the other paused to listen, courteously enough, but evidently pressed for time.

"How long do we stop in Lewiston?"

"No longer than we must. Just catch up the mail and take on passengers."

He made a penciled note on his record and turned away.

"Conduct—please! Which door are you going to open?"

He whirled about and really looked

at the eager questioner now, and the face turned up to his was so lovely that it would have been a hard heart indeed that could have resisted its appeal. Color touched her cheeks as he gazed at her steadily, and she smiled.

"Well! Well!" laughed the conductor, with the utmost good nature, removing his cap and thrusting his fingers through his fast-graying hair. "Are you sure he'll be down at this hour to see you?"

Confusion overspread her face, and a richer pink dyed her cheeks, but nothing could have helped her more at the moment.

"You'll have to be quick, and so will he!" he added, in a kindly, fatherly way, still smiling. "Here, you Sam! I want you."

"Thank you!"

She seized her suit case, as he turned, and followed him to the platform. Sam, who had appeared at the call, objected a trifle resentfully.

"Dey're openin' up de oder cars for de passengers," said he, but instantly, as he felt the magic touch of a bill thrust into his hand, his attitude changed. "No, dey ain't, neder! We'se goin' to strike 'em plumb to!"

Grinning widely, he did quick work.

"Ca'eful!" he warned, for Genevieve had glided past him and down the steps before the train had quite stopped.

"Don't get off, lady!" he insisted.

But she was already off, deaf to any command or entreaty that might be sent to her from that train, and on the instant there came a young man toward her, almost running into her outstretched arms.

"Gordon!"

"All aboard!" came a far cry, echoed from car to car.

"All aboa'd!" said the porter, reaching out to touch the young man's sleeve. "Sorry, sah! Gotta part you!"

"I'm not going!" gasped the girl. "I've changed my mind! Oh, thank

you! Thank you!" For Sam, glancing at the bill, saw that it held very alluring figures. He sprang back, smiling delightedly; the train began to move.

Silent and still, Gordon and Genevieve stood watching the cars glide past, darkened Pullmans one after the other, and finally the smoker, misty with the blue haze of cigars. Standing in the aisle, talking with a group of men who were lingering over a card game, was Truesdale Ellis, debonair, gay, laughing.

"Quickest love-makin' I evah did see!" the porter chuckled, as the train pulled out.

Ah, but it wasn't love-making! A sobbing girl was led to a waiting machine by a young man whose face was whiter even than hers in the moonlight. She clung to his arm, repeating spasmodically: "Gordon! Gordon!" But though the arm stanchly supported her, guided and helped, there was nothing loverlike in his manner; neither was it brotherly or friendly. It was as near being noncommittal as manner could be, but this she did not notice till the car was speeding on its homeward way. Then, glancing at his face, she gasped:

"Gordon, don't look like that! How did you know? How did you guess? Oh, if you hadn't come!"



On the instant there came a young man toward her, almost running into her outstretched arms.

He did not answer at once, not until they were spinning up the smooth roadway; then, jerkingly, as if under severe strain, he spoke:

"I've suspected for some time that you were growing seriously interested in Ellis. To-night I knew you were in love with him—or thought you were. That letter I mentioned was not a mere excuse to get away gracefully to-night. It was true that I expected a letter, but it didn't come till a later mail. It was in answer to one I had written making inquiries about Truesdale Ellis. It told me one thing that was worth knowing. I was sitting up in my room at the window, thinking the summer over, won-

dering what I'd better say to you when I next met you, glad that he was leaving to-night, glad that—unless you wrote to him—the whole affair was over in safety, when I saw you go past with your suit case."

"You knew me!"

"Yes, I knew you, Genevieve," with a short, bitter laugh. "It takes more than a dark veil to disguise a girl I've known always."

The car leaped forward like some live thing under his guidance.

"I called, but you didn't hear. I didn't dare call again for fear of rousing the household. I ran downstairs—hadn't thought of going to bed yet—but you were already out of sight and had about reached the station, I knew. To make a scene there before Hiram Bates and Bobby Atley was—unthinkable, and yet I hoped somehow to get you away without any one knowing."

He paused a moment, and when he spoke again, some of the excitement of his own experience crept into his voice:

"The car needed 'gas,' and when I reached the station, the express had just pulled out. I knew, if all went well, I could reach Lewiston in fifteen minutes by taking the short cut, while the train made the detour in twenty minutes. There was a chance, even if I caught you at the station, that you wouldn't go back with me, and I wanted enough gasoline for any emergency. I hadn't much time to think, and my plans were hazy, but I was trusting to luck—or perhaps to something greater than luck—to do the right thing.

"Five minutes with Ellis alone was what I really wanted, rather than a talk just then with you. There would have been no trouble, I think, and no disturbance. The last thing he desired was discovery, and I would have had to mention only one or two of our American laws which he had temporarily dismissed from his mind. He

knew well enough the risk he was running, but you were worth the risk, and he was trusting to you and to his own skill to keep his name from ever being associated with your disappearance. He bought accommodations for one? Of course! As for me, I knew I could pay my fare on the train, wire your father without giving Bobby Atley any clew to what was going on, telegraph back about my machine, and at least take care of you till we could get back. I didn't dream that I would meet you at once, and that you would welcome me and want to get off so soon. You surprised me there!"

Genevieve wrung her hands.

"Gordon, please! Don't look so dreadful! I don't know you at all!"

And, indeed, she did not, for this man beside her was a stranger, not her lifelong friend and comrade. He turned on her almost savagely.

"Do you know what you were planning to do? Your father's heart would have broken! Your mother would have died from the shock! Your friends would have been cut off forever! Your life would have been ruined—ruined! And I—I——" He hesitated, ground his teeth, and choked out the words: "For that worse than dog of a man!"

"Don't! Don't! I've suffered enough! I've lived years since you saw me! You were wrong when you said I had grown up this summer—I grew up on that train from Humphreys to Lewiston. Don't be cruel to me! What can I do, Gordon?"

The car slowed down and his voice softened:

"What can you do, Genevieve? Do you really want my advice?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then tell me all about it right now, will you? I want to be fair. I want to understand. I haven't the right to ask, but——"

She interrupted with pathetic eagerness:

"Oh, I'll tell you, Gordon, everything, every word!"

Falteringly she began, and pitiful enough the poor little story sounded, robbed of its rainbow colors forever. More steadily she went on, after a few moments, omitting nothing, even when she came to the recent love-making—so very recent that the man beside her almost groaned in helpless rage—sitting

"He's married, Genevieve."

"I know," she answered listlessly, too weary from spent emotions to raise her voice. "I heard the conductors talking about him. I'm coming to that."

The story finished to its last detail, they sat silent till the machine turned into the quiet streets of Humphreys and, mounting the incline, stopped in front of Hill House.



"Tell me all about it right now, will you? I want to be fair. I want to understand. I haven't the right to ask, but——"

with her hands clasped about her knees, staring straight in front of her, talking in a tired monotone. As he listened, a curiously sad peace settled down upon his troubled face, and once he said gently:

"You poor little kid! That's all you were, a little kid!"

But when she came to her panic of fear on the train, which she made marvelously graphic in spite of her lifeless tone, the look in his eyes was one that Ellis would not have cared to see.

"The same dear home, the same sweet garden, the same beautiful flowers," said she, as he helped her down and opened the gate.

"And the same little girl!" said Gordon steadily.

But she shook her head with infinite pathos.

"No, Gordon, the 'little girl' is dead, forever dead!"

She walked up the path wearily, and he put out his arm to assist her. Her hand found his and clung to it.

"Gordon, I—I can't ever forget what you've done for me to-night. My heart is too sore to talk any more now, but—but—I want you to know that I'm being punished for what I did, that I'm suffering enough to suit even you, if that helps any!"

"Genevieve!"

With that one protesting word, he leaped over the frozen barrier between them and became again the Gordon she had always known.

"Oh, I know I have hurt you terribly, Gordon. I don't know just how—but somehow. And I—am—so—sorry!"

Every atom of resentment was gone from his voice when he answered, and his tone had a new note of strong, sustaining comfort, and was gently authoritative as well.

"You have your key? Give it to me. Now go in quietly and go to bed, and go to sleep. There's no blame in my heart—for you now." A slight pause; then, as if the words were fairly wrung from him: "You still care for him?"

A heartbreaking little moan escaped her lips:

"No! No! But I am so utterly sick—so afraid of love!"

"Love! That wasn't love!"

She roused from her apathy at his indignation.

"No?"

"No!" Then, very gently, a hand on either shoulder as he looked down at her: "No, Genevieve! Good night, dear!"

She ascended the stairs, prepared for bed in the cool darkness, slipped on the rose robe, and stole across the hall. She must hear that beloved voice.

"Father!"

A low, faltering word, but it brought instant response:

"Yes, dear? Are you awake yet? Frightened, little one?" For she had run to his bed and knelt down beside it. "A bad dream, darling?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"There, there! It's all right now! Father's here! Why, you're shaking! You're not ill, are you?"

"No. Why are you awake?" she parried.

His hand, his dear, precious hand, groped for her hair and smoothed it, as always, the wrong way, and with difficulty she restrained a burst of sobs.

"I've been lying here thinking about mother's home-coming to-morrow, and worrying about you—I don't know why. I was just going over to see if you were all right if you hadn't come in. There wouldn't be much left of father if mother were not coming back or if anything happened to my little girl."

Simple enough words, but there were realms more in them than she could have understood earlier in the evening. She took his hand, pressed her lips to it, held it against her cheek; and something vaguely, strangely sweet in the accustomed caress, familiar as it was, sent a pang to his heart.

"I'm afraid you're growing up," he sighed. "It makes me feel queer to see you looking into a new world, a world your mother and I found so happy, but utterly untried to you!" Then, apparently quite irrelevantly: "What a fine lad Gordon is!"

"Good night," she whispered, unable to bear more.

He laughed like a boy, teasingly.

"All right now, are you? Sure? Good night, dear!"

She went slowly away, but before she reached the hall she paused, wanting she scarcely knew what, but waiting expectantly. And she had not crossed the threshold before he called to her:

"Jinks!"

"Yes, father?"

Like the sweetest music in the world came the words she longed to hear, bringing peace to her harassed soul, courage to her aching heart:

"Leave my door open, dear, so I'll hear you if you call."

The Cad

By Grace Lea Army

Author of "The House that Jack Built," "When Jill Came Tumbling After," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

Which was the cad—Don Pavlo, Jill, or Jack?

ON a gray December day, when the rain fell softly, discouragingly, for hour after hour, as it not infrequently does in New Orleans just at Christmas time, Jill sat before the fire in the living room of the little house in Oak Street Drive and wept—silently, but copiously.

In one hand she held a crumpled letter from Jack, on duty on the border, and black words stared from the white paper thus: "I never thought it of you— Hard for a man to realize— All women— That cad— Know how I feel—" On the page that was hidden in her lap were the unkindest words of all: "—may be lucky enough to get in the way of a sniper's bullet down here."

The cruelty of that! Ah, how Jill wept! Her nose was distressingly pink and her eyes were dimmed and her hair was sadly, if becomingly, mussed.

Upon this tableau Don Pavlo was ushered in. You may remember Don Pavlo. He was the man Jill had known before she met Jack—a fascinating, irresponsible sort of fellow, Othello and Lothario in one. These months past, while Jack had been in the State camp and later in Texas, Don Pavlo had been in New Orleans.

You gather that Don Pavlo and none other was the "cad" of whom Jack wrote. But think of Jill in such a situation!

The explanation was that Don Pavlo had known so much of army life, had been able to answer all of her questions

as to what was probably happening to Jack. There was no scandal in the fact that she went with him to an occasional picture show—Jack's mother playing chaperon—or gave him tea of an idle afternoon. She was wrapped up, heart and soul, in Jack, as the saying is, and never dreamed that any one could think what Jack himself had thought.

Now, in the wake of Jack's letter came Don Pavlo, and little fires from the brand that Jack had thrown leaped out and charged the atmosphere with tongues of flame.

"What is it?" asked Don Pavlo.

He stood at one corner of the hearth and looked down upon Jill inquiringly.

"It's nothing—at a-all," said Jill, and forthwith gave the lie to her own words by an uncontrollable little sob.

"Of course," Don Pavlo soothed her, "but what?"

"This horrid weather—just gets—on my nerves!" Jill salved her conscience with the thought that this was really true. "And Christmas is almost here and—"

"Jack can't make it home?"

"Too much red tape!" she told him bitterly. "So many men are trying to come home to their wives, now that there isn't going to be a fight—"

There was a new, uncertain note in her voice, a flashing, wide-eyed glance that she sent him—Jack's words in her mind—that caused Don Pavlo reflection. The silence lengthened to an almost unbearable point.

"Suppose," he said then, in a masterful way he had, a way that—deny it though she will—sends a delicious thrill through any woman's veins, "suppose you tell me all about it."

That masterful way and the accompanying thrill had something to do with it and the weather played its part; Jack's letter and nerves will answer for the rest.

"O-o-oh, you're so *funny*!" cried Jill, spacing the words between tears and laughter and inarticulate little gasps. "Tell you!"

The emphasis she gave the pronoun was a startling thing. In its revealing flash, Don Pavlo's keen black eyes went to the letter in her hand. Comprehension dawned.

"Tell me," he said again.

"Jack thinks," gasped poor Jill, "that is, he doesn't think—you ought to come—to see me—while he's away—"

The subtle flattery that one man's jealousy is to another's soul sent a sudden fire through Don Pavlo's veins, but, all unsuspecting as she was, Jill quenched it.

"It's too ridiculously absurd! What earthly difference could it make?"

Beyond an echoing "What indeed?" wrung from him in sudden bitterness and ill-suppressed, Don Pavlo made no answer. Silence came.

In that silence, Jill's frenzy left her, left her with cheeks aflame—utterly dismayed at what she had revealed. She would have bitten out her tongue if the words could so have been unsaid. Don Pavlo stood with his hands rammed deep into his pockets and looked at the fire. He helped her by that much.

"It never occurred to me," said Jill at last, in a voice that quivered once or twice, "that any one could think it—wasn't—right!" She spoke in all sincerity, as Don Pavlo knew. That worldly ignorance of Jill's was her great charm in his eyes. "Jack doesn't understand—and letters are tricky things

— Perhaps his coffee wasn't good the morning he wrote. Jack's a different man when his coffee isn't good. But how he could ever think— And you—of all men! Why you've been like a brother—or a cousin—to me all my life. I'd never think of you any other way!"

Don Pavlo felt a certain sting in that. Wryly smiling, he raised his eyes from the fire on the hearth and looked at Jill, a questioning, challenging glance that brought the color to her cheeks.

"I couldn't!" she cried. "And neither could you—you know it!" The dutiful wife was rampant in her tone. "It's most absurd of any one to feel that way. But of course if Jack does—there's just one thing to do. You mustn't come to see me any more."

Again Don Pavlo raised his eyes to hers, and again the color surged into her cheeks. An eerie feeling stole over her, numbing her very finger tips. Don Pavlo made her feel, for the first time since she'd known him, that the danger Jack had imagined might be real.

And for that Jill punished him—as instinctively and fiercely as a child shuts his hand upon the bee that stings him. Possibilities that she had seen upon the motion-picture screen and between the pages of a book rose threateningly before her—possibilities she had never thought of in connection with herself.

She shrank from Don Pavlo.

"I—I never want to see you again!" she cried.

And when he went—perforce—she crumpled down into the biggest wicker chair and sobbed.

"Oh, Jack!" she wailed. "If only you were coming home for Christmas!"

A little flight of sparks went winging up the chimney; a holly berry fell from the wreath on the door; the rain hissed softly against the windowpanes. But Jill sat suddenly quite still, eyes wide, lips parted, a great thought flaming in her brain.

"I could go to him!" was her thought,



She stole forth in the gathering dusk in mortal fear that some one would see and call her back.

built upon this inexplicable, but urgent need of Jack and the remembrance of one Cousin Martha's Christmas check. "I can——"

Plans mapped themselves like castles in the flames. By some miracle, everything she needed for the journey was ready—hat, suit, and shoes. Jack's mother would take care of the house, and Cousin Martha's check would cover all expenses. Starting the next day but

one, she'd get to Jack on Christmas Eve.

Bright-eyed with the intoxicant of daring, she bought her ticket the next day. She fairly bubbled with excitement whenever Jack's mother spoke to her, and when the appointed time arrived, she stole forth in the gathering dusk in mortal fear that some one would see and call her back.

In the station on the bleary-lighted

river front, people were coming and going home for Christmas; a Salvation Army Santa Claus tinkled his too few coins at the door; in the darkness of the outer shed loomed Christmas trees, labeled and tied, shipped in from the country for the coming festival.

Jill saw and heard and told herself that Christmas was *so* nice. It was amazing how her point of view had changed with the certainty of seeing Jack.

Through that long first night, when she lay awake in her berth, exhilarated by the swift motion of the train, she acknowledged that she was running away from Don Pavlo—running to Jack for refuge from the disquieting thoughts Jack's jealousy and Don Pavlo's too personal glances had instilled. Thought of Don Pavlo would creep in and threaten her peace of mind. The thought that comforted was that she would be safe with Jack on Christmas Eve.

Jill rose in the morning with the very happiest light in her brown eyes. She came forth from the trials of the Pullman dressing room with the light unquenched, and took her place in a vacant seat, while the porter tussled with her berth. She rose when he flung the last blanket into the recesses of the upper berth.

The aisle of a Pullman is a narrow thing. You cross it in a step or two, with little thought of what may happen as you cross, but in the center of that aisle, Jill faced—Don Pavlo.

Her elation went from her in a little cry.

"You!" she breathed, like any lady in a melodrama, and blushed a startled, rosy red. If she were wise, she gave a prayer of thanks that Jack could not see that incriminating blush. Don Pavlo's Byronic countenance, his eloquent eyes, filled her with dismay. The first thought of the once guileless Jill

was that he had followed her. Her second thought was calmer.

"You're going out to—join the troop?"

When Don Pavlo only bowed, she thought he mocked her.

Truth to tell, he was as much surprised as she. The difference was that he met the situation with rejoicing—played with fire gladly and risked the burning of his fingers eagerly enough. He thought of the stormy interview with Jill, of the light Jack's jealousy would shed upon the coincidence, and the smile that flickered across his face in appreciation gave it, to Jill's eyes, a look of unholy guilt.

"You never said—— I didn't know," she accused him.

Defense was a matter of few words.

"It's the best place to get into the game—what game there is. An occasional skirmish with snipers may prove more or less exciting. Christmas—this time of the year," said Don Pavlo, with a significant and penetrating glance, "is an empty thing—to a lonely chap—like me."

The tone, the word "snipers"—used casually enough, but bringing Jack's letter forcefully to mind—deepened the carmine in her cheeks.

"For the matter of that, you never told me that *you* were going out——"

"I decided suddenly," said Jill. "I'm going to surprise Jack."

She hated Don Pavlo for the twitching of his lips. It was so obvious that she would surprise Jack in a way she hadn't planned.

"Why can't you get off somewhere else!" she cried in sudden desperation; then, "I—I didn't mean that. There's no earthly reason why you should."

Of course there wasn't any reason. Only, circumstances might look black to a jealous husband's eyes, and Jack was certainly a jealous husband—woe to Jill!

She was conscious of foolish tears

behind her lashes, of curious faces peering at them from all sides, and so she managed a little laugh that set appearances in their proper and insignificant place. She'd treat Don Pavlo as she always had—as cousin—brother—friend.

Don Pavlo was quick to catch a cue.

"I think the diner's just ahead," he said. "Have you had your breakfast yet?"

He was so charming in his badinage, so disarming in his glances, that Jill soon found herself looking toward him with trusting friendliness. Ever so often, it must be confessed, a convulsion of memory seized her, and then Jack was the subject of the conversation.

"When I think," said Jill, "that it's all my fault—— If it hadn't been for me, he'd never have joined the old artillery. He did it years ago, you know, so that he might take me riding on the cavalry horses. When the war excitement came, of course he couldn't get out. He had to go. If there had really been a war, it might not have been so bad——"

"If there had been war, Jack would most probably have been killed," Don Pavlo consoled her.

"Ah, don't!" begged Jill. The panic into which the mere suggestion threw her was all that could be desired. No woman who felt that way about her husband need fear other men—Jill thought.

But one can't be entertained by scenery that is only mile upon mile of flat yellow land and sagebrush, with here and there a cluster of ungainly oil derricks or a scattering of frame houses. And Don Pavlo's companionship was an insidious thing. It took upon itself the nature of a lark.

The train was due to reach that particular little sand-scarred village on the Texas plains where Jack's troop was camped at six o'clock on Christmas Eve.

"It means so much to get there for Christmas Eve," Jill told Don Pavlo. "We've always had such jolly times then, Jack and I. I'd be perfectly miserable—and so would he—spending it apart."

A little prairie dog came unexpectedly into the foreground of the desert stretch through which they passed just then and laughed at Jill. She didn't see him, but Don Pavlo smiled.

"Suppose there were a wreck—we were delayed?"

Jill shivered.

"It would break my heart," she said.

Of course Don Pavlo didn't want to break Jill's heart, of course his words were lightly spoken, but they touched the rim of possibilities. At high noon of that day a wreck occurred.

The fact that the trouble wasn't with their train made the situation all the more exasperating. Their engine puffed and snorted with the steam of perfect health; not even a hot box threatened the turning of the wheels; but word came back that somewhere between Jack and Jill the wayside was littered with box cars in a more or less splintery state, crosssties were torn from their moorings, and rails bent. The case was hopeless for the time.

To Jill, who waited in her section, Don Pavlo brought the tragic news. They were marooned, thrown back in their schedule many hours—exactly how many no one knew. They must wait where they were, while in that indefinite "somewhere ahead" men worked to remove the debris and repair the damage.

"We won't get there to-day—for Christmas Eve?" cried Jill.

In Don Pavlo's eyes the gods had smiled benignly in thus granting him so many unexpected hours of Jill's society. He did his best to repay their favor by consoling her. She would have said it wasn't possible—that the hours *must* drag. But they didn't.

At six o'clock or thereabouts, they dined in all good-fellowship, the diner, fortunately, being attached. Around them, fellow travelers made the best of the unfortunate delay, and the Christmas spirit was evident in laughter and gay voices. Some one, inspired, lowered the lights at a given time, and sugar soaked with brandy was lighted in a score or more of coffee spoons, so that little blue leaping flames shot up in the dusk of the diner, flickered and flared and filled the atmosphere with a pungent suggestion of wine.

"Ah—isn't it pretty?" cried Jill.

In voice and eyes there was that treacherous warmth that comes of shared pleasure, but when Don Pavlo's hand closed quickly upon hers, lying outstretched on the cloth, and palm met palm with the indefinable flash of an electric current in the pressure, she woke to frightened pulses in ears and throat. It was only a second, while the lights were low. They brightened upon Don Pavlo so composed, so cool of speech, that Jill wondered— But her hand still tingled, clenched though it was in her lap, and Don Pavlo's seemed not quite steady as he lighted his cigar.

"On Christmas Eve—" he said and stopped there. Apology—explanation? He let it go at that.

It was, beyond question, the queerest Christmas Eve that Jill had ever known. The stars came out in a cool, clear sky that curved down to meet an infinity of shadowed plain. There was a man with a violin and willing fingers who played for them, and a little woman who sang Christmas hymns in a velvety contralto voice. Finally, as a climax to the whole remarkable thing, they danced in the narrow confines of the observation car, while a cold wind whined and wailed at the windows—the uncanny sound of silence made articulate.

Despite that warning in the diner—defiant of it, perhaps—Jill gave herself to the dancing with the abandon of a

happy child. She danced with Don Pavlo again—and yet again. When she had danced with him four times, a woman resting beside her in an interval leaned forward with a smiling, happy face and the evident intent of saying something nice.

"You and your husband," said the woman to Jill, "surely dance well together. I like to see married folks that way. 'Tain't always you do."

"My husband!" cried Jill. "O-o-oh!"

As inconspicuously as she might, Jill fled. It was nearing ten o'clock, but she neither knew nor cared what time it was. She only saw that her berth had been made up, and into its sanctuary she crept, with a tremulous sob of vexation. The woman's mistake was natural, but startling. Jill heaped reproaches upon her own head, reviewed her conduct scathingly. She thought of Jack—as she pictured him in his lonely tent this Christmas Eve; thought of herself, laughing and dining and dancing with another man. Jack had called Don Pavlo "cad," but Jill told herself it was she who deserved that name.

The train jerked, then swayed once more upon its way, while Jill thus clothed herself in sackcloth and ashes. Morning found them past the wreck, sighting the goal. There were circles underneath Jill's eyes.

"If he only can forgive me!" she whispered to herself, while she waited in the vestibule for the train to stop.

She felt the tightness in her throat that always heralded emotional crises. It was natural enough that Jack shouldn't be waiting on the platform, but the fact threw her once more upon Don Pavlo's kindness.

Don Pavlo hadn't questioned her retreat the night before; he didn't question now, beyond one searching glance, the new restraint that marked her manner. He had realized from the first that his were stolen sweets.

"I—I want to go straight to Jack.

Won't you take me there?" Jill asked him, and he did that much for her, conquering a sudden rebelliousness of spirit.

He found a guide, a fellow soldier of Jack's, whose pale-blue, questioning eyes regarded Jill strangely when their errand was revealed. She thought this merely embarrassment, perhaps, in one who hadn't seen her like in months—such are the hardships of a soldier's life—but once she saw a furtive smile and once she heard him murmur to himself, deploring something.

She walked on, preceding Don Pavlo and the guide in her nervous eagerness to get to Jack. But she heard them behind her in low-voiced colloquy, and then she caught the mention of Jack's name and—"stray bullet!"

"What did you say? Has Jack been hurt? Tell me! Why didn't you tell me at first?" she cried. She ran back to them, laid hands upon the sunburned giant's arm in her excitement, and shook it. "Tell me—please!" she begged.

But when his face only burned the fiercer in dismay, and Don Pavlo spoke a would-be soothing word, Jill turned again and stumbled toward Jack's tent—one among many, dust colored against the dust.

She was guided by blind impulse,



"But, oh," she wept, "I never knew you had been hurt—that there'd been a battle! When was it, Jack?"

numb with fear, but she found the tent flap with a trembling hand and pushed it back—and cast herself down beside Jack's cot.

"O-o-oh, Jack!" she cried.

He lay there, eyes closed, his face—burned deeply by the suns and winds of Mexico and Texas—a vivid thing against the whiteness of the sheet. There was no hero's pallor, no lips of suffering, but one arm, neatly bandaged, hung in a telltale sling.

He opened his eyes so wide when

she called his name that the effect was altogether startling.

"Jill!" The expression on his face added: "Good Lord! Am I so badly off that they sent for you?"

He ran his free hand back through his sunburned hair—burned blond in streaks—as if to clear his vision. Jill's head was down upon the sheet; her tears were damaging the bandages; her lips caressed them. Jack put his hand, in that dear, fumbling way of his, upon her hair.

"I came—I couldn't stay at home—Christmas without you— Cousin Martha's check— Wanted to get here Christmas Eve— Train wrecked—"

A word or two was muffled in the sheet, but Jack heard enough to understand. Jill made no mention of Don Pavlo, you observe. The thought of his existence—Jack's jealousy—her own disturbing fears—were sponged from her mind by the great tragedy of Jack's being wounded.

"But, oh," she wept, "I never knew you had been hurt—that there'd been a battle! When was it, Jack? And where? Were many killed? Oh, Jack—my hero!"

The words had no ring of melodrama to Jill's ears. She raised her head and looked at Jack with shining eyes whose pride no tears could dim.

But Jack shut *his* eyes as with a sudden twinge of pain, so that Jill cried out. Her heart was quivering on her lips.

"It's nothing," he told her quickly. "I'm all right. How did you get here? What did you hear as you came through camp—about the—fight?"

"I only heard—at the door of the tent almost—that you'd been hurt. I didn't know but you'd been nearly killed—"

The words caught and quivered in her throat. She was so happy in just being with Jack that she couldn't bring herself to mention Don Pavlo, now that she was reminded of him. Her fear of him seemed of no consequence at all, a thing to be laughed over with Jack—at some later date.

To Don Pavlo, lingering in that great "outside," Jack's fellow soldier imparted a choice bit of news.

"Tough luck for the old chap," he said and chuckled. "You could have knocked me down when you told me who she was. Coming this way—the very morning after— Will she make things hot when she finds how he got that arm? I shouldn't wonder. Some little queen—but it sure looks bad for Jack. Happening last night like it did, nobody knows the straight of it yet. There was a bunch of 'em skylarkin' with the girl—pretty little Mexican sings in the picture show—and her hombre was too quick on the trigger. See? Tough luck Jack got in the way!"

A quick gleam of understanding smoldered in Don Pavlo's eye.

"Tough luck, you're right!" he said.

The man in khaki chuckled.

"Makes a fellow seem a cad—Christmas Eve and her on the way out. Jack's a mighty fine scout, though—and that Mexican girl oughtn't to roll her eyes the way she does."

They turned away, Don Pavlo whispering an echo of a Christmas hymn that had to do with peace on earth, good will toward men.



The Fascinating of Mr. Savage

By Helen Milecete [S. Carleton]

Author of "The Mic Mac," "Last Luck Lake," etc.

The adventures of a young widow in search of a husband.

CHAPTER I.

I AM going to float a company. I must do something!"

"Do," said Mrs. Norton. She nestled into her cushions of pale-blue satin. "Get George to help you. He's the best man I ever knew to float things that are er—er——"

"Oh, my company is to be a limited company, and it won't be 'er—er——' There'll be only one shareholder. It's a real company."

"Have you made up the prospectus?"

"Yes, for private circulation only. The prospects are fair; the results may be millions!" She spoke in the grandiloquent tone one uses when relating the superiority of a hair restorer or a complexion wash. "I'm going to float myself." She spoke slowly and with deliberation.

"Float yourself!" For once Mrs. Norton's sweet voice was shrill. "Are you going to float in a bathing suit or on a raft? Who will pay? How will you make any money?"

"I shall stake my all. Listen!" She continued as if she were reading aloud: "A good figure, excellent feet, a charming manner," with magnetism thrown in, and——"

"What are you driving at?" interrupted Mrs. Norton.

"Listen, Gerty. I'm twenty-seven."

"Don't say it so loud. Every one knows I'm older than you are. I'm well aware of your age, but you don't look it. You can be twenty-seven for ages yet, twenty-three to a man who adores you, twenty sometimes. Why, I knew——"

"Yes," interrupted Adela, "I know you did. That woman had money. It's impossible to be permanently twenty without money. I'm getting thin, I'm losing my looks, I'm vegetating while I'm young, and life is passing. Do you remember that old tune we used to sing as a part song at school—'Carnival's passing—passing away?' That is in my head all day. It's true; my carnival—my youth—is passing away. And I want to live and——"

"Do add, 'to suffer,' for of course you will suffer. Whereas, if you just sat down and waited patiently, you don't know what might happen to you."

"Wait? For what? For Judgment Day?"

"Marry," said Mrs. Norton lazily.

"Marry! Marry!" repeated her friend with scorn. "You talk as if it were as easy to get a husband as it is to advertise for a cook!"

"I know this place is poky and dull, but I want you to come and spend the summer with me at Murray Bay."

"I'm going to London."

"You're going to London?" Mrs. Norton was breathless. "To London! What for?"

"To float the company."

"You—Adela Percy, widow, pretty—no, you aren't pretty, but sometimes I think you have more fascination than mere prettiness—are going to London to run a—— Is it a shop you're thinking of starting?"

"Yes, a shop."

"What are you going to sell?"

"Myself."

"Good heavens, Adela! I don't call that a joke!"

"I don't mean it to be a joke. Do I look like a joke?"

Mrs. Norton glared at her. Adela wore a long, plain black gown; there was no touch of white anywhere on it. Her hair was done low on her neck; her blue eyes were full of tears; her face was strained, and her ridiculous baby mouth was set and hard.

"You don't look at all like a joke," said Mrs. Norton. "You don't look pretty."

"I feel moldy," said Adela, "as if I were damp and covered with clogging furry stuff, just like jam when it's going bad. You can shudder, but I feel it. Dear Gerty, you've been so good to me. You won't tell, will you?"

"I'll tell George. I never keep anything from him."

"George doesn't matter. You won't mention it to the others?"

"No, I swear that. But go on. I want to hear all about it."

"I'm starting for London on the twenty-seventh of March. I sail from Boston in the *Amsterdam*. You know my life—how hard I have had to work?"

The other nodded.

"But you seemed to like it," she said.

"Of course. I'm not such a fool as to tell what I feel. The woman who talks courts ridicule. But I loathed it. When Bertram took me away from it all and married me, I—— Do you know that I loved Bertram? I could have killed him when he went off to South Africa, and left me—not because he went away, but because he wanted to go. I would rather have seen him dead than going away from me living. He volunteered, you know."

"He was very fond of you."

"I was very fond of him, you mean. He sailed away and I was alone, and—well, you know that he was killed at Paardeberg. I get a little pension,

but from being prosperous I became poor. He left me one thousand pounds, nearly five thousand dollars—it sounds more in dollars. Now I'm twenty-seven, I will never love any one again, and——"

Mrs. Norton gave a sound that resembled a chuckle.

"Never!" asseverated Adela. "You can laugh. If I had any feeling left, if I felt there was any chance of my loving again, do you think that I *would*, that I *could*, do what I am going to do?"

"You haven't told me yet what you are going to do."

"I'm afraid you'll tell."

"All right, then, keep your secret buried in your own heart. I don't want to know it. I should hate to be intrusted with a secret that, if told, would bring disaster to any happy home. A secret that could hurt any woman could never rest happily in my soul."

"Woman! What woman could it hurt?"

"Aren't you planning an elopement?"

"Didn't I tell you that I could never love any one again?"

"Alas, that announcement is generally the prelude to some awful and contraband act! I think you have made up your mind to elope with a married man."

"I always knew you were an idiot," said Adela.

"Explain quickly," said Gerty. "Don't deviate from the truth. Though, Adela, I think you are making a mistake. It's not wise to strip your soul for a woman to look at."

"I suppose I ought to tell you what I mean to do without giving you any reason for it. Still, Gerty, I can trust you."

"Trust no woman, howe'er pleasant," said Gerty.

"I've sold the bonds in which my five thousand dollars were invested. I

have that sum in the bank now, and I'm going to take it and seek my fortune. Don't interrupt me." Gerty had her mouth open, but she shut it again. "I'm going to invest my capital in myself, in my clothes, in my own personal adornment! I'm going out into the arena to find a husband, or else to the workhouse—when my money is all spent."

"Arenas are dangerous. You're not used to a crowd or to the noise."

"I know, but I may as well go and try my luck. I'm going to England on a good ship—not too quick a liner, but on a good, substantial steamer on which the not-rushed-for-time people travel. I'm not bad looking, and I'll marry any one who can support me. How could I even contemplate this step——"

"If you were not mad? You were not going to say that? I beg your pardon, I naturally thought it was the only finish possible to your sentence."

"How could I even think of it," continued Adela, "if my heart were not dead—dead and cold, in a grave somewhere?"

"You're only twenty-seven. Did you know some wise man said that a woman's strongest passions come on her when she is thirty-five?"

"Passion!" said Adela contemptuously.

"Oh, yes," said Gerty. "You talk of passion as if it were the plague. Wait! You mention your heart as if it were an iron cross you had erected—as if nothing could alter the shape or the form or the inscription on it. Don't you know that a hurricane could blow it down? One night's awful storm could lay it flat on the ground and cover the—what you think everlasting—inscription with water and mud. Your heart is not dead, and some one else might soften it so that it would be possible to put another name on it. You talk as if it were made of granite, like

Cleopatra's Needle, and fixed up on the Thames Embankment with policemen round it. Go home, take two pills, and don't come near me for a week."

Mrs. Percy put on her hat and walked down the one street of the little town to the customhouse. She paid thirty dollars' duty on two gowns and had them sent to her boarding house by the expressman. Then she sent a draft to the steamer's agents in Boston for one hundred and fifty dollars; this was to pay for her cabin on the *Amsterdam*.

She did not go near Mrs. Norton for three days, and at the end of the third Mrs. Norton telephoned to her.

"Come down and dine to-morrow night. We're leaving the next day by the maritime express. Are you sane?"

"I'll come to dinner," said Mrs. Percy, and she laughed a little. "I'm still the same."

Arrayed in one of her new frocks—the other was for the steamer, and it was short, smart; there were shoes, stockings, and a hat to go with it—Adela walked down to the hotel.

"You were not in earnest?" said Gerty. "You've given up that mad scheme of yours. You look sweet, ducky, lovely, in that gown. How becoming black and white is to your skin! You're not going to London. That gown will do for Murray Bay."

"I've taken my passage. I sail in a week," said Adela.

"You'll have no luck," said Gerty.

Adela only smiled.

"I'm not going for luck," she said calmly. "I want something less ephemeral than luck. I'm going to look for a situation. Marriage is the best profession for a woman, and I'm going to try to get a suitable place in the profession. Why not?"

Mrs. Norton did not answer her.

"Have you anything to send to Mrs. van Ingen? I'll go to see her."

Mrs. Norton looked critically at Adela, and she decided in her wrath and amazement that Mrs. Percy's hair was dyed. No woman was ever born with blue eyes and black hair! Such an effective combination must have been engineered. Gerty was annoyed; she had made her own arrangements for Murray Bay, and she had intended that Adela should assume the care of her children and her husband while she amused herself in other ways. That night she wrote to her sister, Mrs. van Ingen—the Mrs. van Ingen from whom Adela expected so much.

CHAPTER II.

They were taking in the gangway. That means a lot. The last link with the land was going. Adela stood on the promenade deck of the *Amsterdam* and felt an impulse to bolt ashore. She felt lonely, frightened, friendless, and unprotected. In all her life she had never gone anywhere alone. The casual glances thrown at her by strangers made her feel hot and cold. Did they think that she was an adventuress? An adventuress! The truth of that name as applied to herself made her uncomfortable. The tugs were snuffing round the big ship, gradually turning her. Adela looked at the land and at the houses in the clear spring sunshine; she wondered when and how she would see them again. She felt as if she were starting for the north pole. The wind blew cold on her face and she shivered. The voyage in search of fortune had begun.

She went below and put on the black-and-white cloth dream of a gown that she had ordered with a view to the undoing of man on board ship. The long coat that went with it was of scarlet, the color of bravery. She had a cup of tea and came up on deck, where she stood by the rail watching the light-

houses glide by. How fast, how unnecessarily fast, the *Amsterdam* was going! The sea was beginning to be ruffled; the bell rang; the engines stopped; the pilot clambered down the wriggling rope ladder. Adela waved a farewell to him with her hand—a farewell to the old life! Only one man saw it. He smiled and went below to find out where his seat was in the saloon. He intended to be near the lady with the blue eyes and the heavy black hair.

A dim rim was all that remained of the land. Adela settled herself down to dullness or to adventure, whichever the world might hold for her. At last the dressing bugle sounded, and she went to array herself for dinner. She had resolved to be perfect as regards clothes, for who knew? Some man with money might see her, might like, might love— She shuddered.

"Are you my neighbor?" A girl came out of the cabin opposite Adela's. "I'm so lonely. I don't know a soul, do you?"

"No," said Adela. "I'm lonely, too."

"I'm going to London," said the girl. "I'm a journalist. You're traveling for pleasure, I'm sure—now, aren't you?" Adela nodded. "I knew that by your gown. You have on such a pretty one. I've got work on the staff of the *Gorgeous Vision*. Ever heard of it?"

"Not yet," said Adela.

"That's right," laughed the other. "You will hear of it. I was getting tired of my life in America, so when they offered me a permanent post, just to write about plays, I took it, with the bad pay and all. I want to get to London! I want to get on! You're going to dress? So am I."

The saloon was full when Adela sailed in. Her gown was too becoming to her, thought some of the other women. They had prepared for seasickness—their careless dressing proclaimed that fact—and they looked as

if they had slung on their blouses, which were not too fresh. Adela was radiant. Why not? The play had begun, and she meant to play the heroine. If she felt shaky, she did not show it; her face trembled, no one knew it.

The steward found her seat for her. Her name was in front of it on a card, but it had been turned round by a curious person. Some one had wanted to know who was coming to that seat. Next to her, on the left, was a man. She did not pause to look at him; her face was too hot to bear the gaze of all the people at the table. She sat down. To her joy, the girl whose cabin was opposite hers had the seat on her right.

"This is nice," said Adela as she looked at the menu. "I always feared that the seats on board ship were arranged by the alphabet, and that the passengers had no joy prepared for them."

"I did it," laughed the girl. "I went to the steward and told him I wanted to sit next you."

The man on Adela's left smiled a little, but no one saw it. He, also, had been to the steward and exchanged a couple of sovereigns for the privilege of having his seat next to Mrs. Percy's. He remarked tentatively:

"I recommend the oysters."

Adela laughed and ordered oysters.

He was studying the menu, and she studied him. He was dark; he had a short, crisp mustache; he was well dressed in old, well-made clothes; and, above all things, he spoke nicely to the steward. Adela decided that he was not uninteresting. Her neighbor, whose name was Miss Furnival, was already gayly conversing with the man on her right.

She turned to Adela and said:

"My neighbor considers it very mean of the steward not to have put him between you and me. His name is Savage. He says he knows Mrs. Norton. She asked him to look out for you."

Adela ordered roast beef and felt that the voyage was not beginning badly.

"I hope I may consider myself introduced to you, Mrs. Percy," said Mr. Savage.

"I think you may," said Adela demurely. "A ship introduction is easily forgotten, if you want to forget it."

"And if I do not want to forget it?" asked Mr. Savage.

"Well, then, it is easily remembered."

"Is this your first voyage?" asked the man next Adela.

"Yes," she answered. "I hope it won't be my last. I'm going to London."

"So am I," he answered. "You go to friends?"

"I hope to meet friends incidentally," said Adela. "I'm going on business."

How nice it sounded! And yet—and yet—

"My name is Crossley," he said. "I know yours is Percy, for I looked at your label."

"At my label?" she repeated. "Oh, I see—you mean my card."

They went up on deck after dinner. The night was calm; the stars shone down out of a white sky that looked clear and cold to her eyes; the air was soft. Adela sat down in her deck chair, and Mr. Crossley put his beside her.

She felt some surprise that Mr. Savage had not come to speak to her. He had said that Mrs. Norton had told him to be civil. Had Mrs. Norton told him more? A cold, horrible chill of apprehension and fear crept into her heart. Had Gerty told him? But no; she would not have been so cruel.

A steward brought her a letter. She was pleased. It was from Gerty.

"May I read it?" she asked, turning to Mr. Crossley.

"By all means, if you can see."

He moved his chair. He was so strong, so hard, so brown, and his hands and nails were such a good

shape! Adela gave a faint sight. He was not the sort of man she had come to attract; he was too good to be married by a woman who would accept him as she would a good situation.

She opened her letter:

DEAREST ADELA: I met Mr. Savage in the train coming up, and he talked of going to England by the *Amsterdam*. I told him to look out for you if he did choose that ship. He is the rich Savage, the proprietor of something; I forget whether it's hair wash or dog biscuit. Anyhow, with your looks and your aspirations, you ought to be able to work him, for he is a millionaire—in pounds, not in dollars. Return to me as Mrs. Reginald Francis Savage and I will forgive you everything. Be sure you don't tell him what you are up to. I hope you will write to me often, for you will have adventures. Yours always, GERTY.

Adela's heart felt lighter. Gerty had not betrayed her confidence. She felt stung with the shame of what Mr. Savage might have said and done had he known of her intentions. The relief of finding that he knew nothing was almost too great.

"I'm tired," she said.

Mr. Crossley accompanied her to the companionway; he carried her rugs and said he hoped to see her again in the morning. She liked his clear-cut face, his air of self-confidence, but who was he? Was she no wiser than a foolish girl to lose her heart so easily? And Mr. Savage was a millionaire—in pounds.

"How are you to-day?"

Adela had breakfasted in bed and then gone on deck for a walk. Some of the passengers were ill; she felt quite gay. Mr. Savage stood by her. He looked worn and gray. The *Amsterdam* was snorting through the sea, beginning to plunge among the big white horses, and the air smelled damp; there was no land smell in it. Adela loved the rocking-horse motion; Mr. Savage looked as if he hated it.

"I love this!" she answered.

Was it her imagination, or was his neck fat and bulgy?

Mr. Crossley was walking up and down. He stopped a moment to ask her how she felt and whether he could do anything for her, but he did not stay with her. She wished he had stayed, but she devoted herself to the fascinating of Mr. Savage. He was with her all day. He spent the next one with her, too. He was attracted by her, she could see, but she did not like his glances. She scolded herself; this was the fault of her too ardent imagination. Yet he did not appeal to her, though he was the rich Savage.

He talked about meeting her in town; he planned dinners and theaters with her and promised to see that she had a good time. But it was all tinsel, and Adela felt gay one moment and dreary the next. He bored her—but he had money. This was not the way to take what Fate gave her. She had a future to live through. Perhaps she would not be able to make her money last for a year, as she had planned it should.

"Any check when you are penniless," said Adela to herself, with a poor attempt at gayety.

Gerty would have been delighted had she seen the way Mr. Savage was beginning to make love to Mrs. Percy. Adela forgot the fact that quick love-making makes dull marrying.

Then the ship began to take green seas on board. To Adela it was all glorious, all new life, but Mr. Savage retired to his cabin to repair the ravages of seasickness. He stayed there, to her great, though unmentioned, joy.

Mr. Crossley then attached himself to her. The deck steward made a point of saying, "The chairs are together, sir." They had the ship pretty much to themselves. She could not find out much of his history. He was a real white man, but had he money? Had he any position? To fall in love with a man as penniless as herself was not

what she had come to do, and she resisted his power over her. Her present feelings, she assured herself, could only be the result of five days' constant conversation with a man who was clever and interesting. She told herself that her interest in him was merely temporary and would vanish like the memory of a good partner at a ball. Finally she ceased to analyze and to argue with herself, and gave herself up to the pleasure of the present. Who ever heard of a woman having her heart lacerated in eight or nine days? They expected to land on the ninth day.

Mr. Savage recovered after the eighth day, and then there was a little comedy. Mr. Crossley stuck to his post; Mr. Savage tried to usurp it. Adela told herself that she was neutral—really she played the game for Crossley. As it happened, this was the best thing she could have done for her much-vaunted future, that future for which she had crossed the ocean to make arrangements. Mr. Savage became earnest.

It was the last evening. She had looked pale—too pale—at dinner. Mr. Crossley ordered champagne and insisted on Mrs. Percy and Miss Furnival's sharing it.

Adela felt sure that he was poor. He had been ranching out in British Columbia, he had told her. Poor! She knew the ghastly ring of that word, and she hated to drink his wine, while she could not refuse it.

"Why are you going back to England?" she asked boldly as she strolled up and down the deck with him.

"I'm going to seek my fortune," he said slowly. "I have an idea that it is waiting for me there."

"Only an idea?" said Adela.

"Well, yes, only an idea."

"Never follow, never stake, anything on an idea," she said earnestly. "I've done that and I have lost all."

"I wonder," said he, "when and where we shall meet again?"

"Nowhere and never," she answered flippantly. "Perhaps you will come and see me at the Metropole."

"Perhaps I will," he answered. "I have no such words as 'nowhere' and 'never' concerning you in my vocabulary."

"Do you live in London? I've never been there. I'm longing to see all the streets and places I've read about."

"I live nowhere just now," said Harold Crossley. "I shall have to be up in town a lot—looking after the idea, you know. This is our last walk together."

"Yes," said Adela, and added to herself, "I can hear the carpenter making my coffin. I didn't spend all my gold to marry a man with a ranch that doesn't pay." He had confessed that. "Nor is running after an idea a better thing to do."

The breeze from the land was cold; the stars were gold and green and red in the clear north light.

"Here you are," said a cheerful voice. Mr. Savage, recovered and self-satisfied, stood before them. "Miss Furnival and I have been looking for you. I want to talk to Mrs. Percy. I haven't seen you for days, and I'm starved for a sight of your face. Mr. Crossley, will you look after Miss Furnival?"

In a minute, the world was altered; the starlight was dimmer, and Mr. Savage and Mrs. Percy strolled along behind Mr. Crossley and Miss Furnival.

"Such a nice girl!" said Mr. Savage, with an admiring glance at Miss Furnival's back. "But crude—too fond of her profession and of money-making."

"So would you be," said Adela, "if you had ever had to do without money. I think a profession is a good thing for a woman."

"Marriage is the best profession for a woman," he said didactically.

"Where did you hear that?" demanded Adela. "It's my maxim. I invented it."

"Did you?" he asked carelessly. "Mrs. Norton said it to me, and I agreed with her. I thought it clever at the time. I'm glad you said it. Every woman ought to marry. It rounds her off; it finishes her. I would never bother talking to a girl when I could talk to a married woman."

"Why not?" asked Adela.

"Don't you know?" He laughed softly. She did not like that laugh. "I suppose it's because a married woman is more amusing, more up in the ways of the world, more lenient. She understands more and isn't as hard as a girl."

"Where have they gone?" asked Adela, for the others had disappeared. Her exclamation was almost a cry.

"Let them go. I want you to myself, to tell you that I love you."

"You don't! You——" She did not believe him.

"Yes, I do. I love you." They were standing at the end of the promenade deck. He put his arm around her and tried to hold her face up to his.

"Don't!" she said. "Don't!"

Memories strangled her; she gasped. Was it the feeling that the wrong man had his arm around her? Her brain insistently asked her this question.

"You little witch! A girl would have let me; a girl wouldn't have known that the moment hadn't come. I'll see you in London, and you won't keep me waiting very long, will you? I love you."

Adela went dolorously down to bed. In spite of her excellent prospects, she did not sleep.

The stewardess called her at five. The pilot was on board; they were going into Liverpool.

Adela went up to town with Miss

Furnival. Mr. Savage fumed and followed by a later train. The ladies went third class; Miss Furnival had to do that, and Adela would not leave her. Mr. Crossley had just time to ask Adela for her town address before she left the ship; he was staying in Liverpool. Mr. Savage invited her to dine with him at the Carlton the next evening. She accepted his invitation. She hated herself. She could not forget Mr. Crossley, and she could have screamed with disgust at her own actions and her own motives. She took Miss Furnival with her to the Metropole for one night.

CHAPTER III.

Adela had written to Mrs. van Ingen from Queenstown. She hoped much from Gerty's sister. Surely Mrs. van Ingen would introduce her to the section of English life that she so yearned to know. But no letter awaited her at the Metropole. She felt as if some one had struck her, though she assured herself there was not time for a letter to have come.

She went shopping and ordered two evening dresses and one fluffy day gown. She paid for them; this investment of her capital looked pretty. She wondered whether Harold Crossley would ever come to see her.

Nancy Furnival, full of indomitable energy, had found a flat for herself. It consisted of a combination bedroom and sitting room, with a tiny pantry containing a gas stove. Nancy had a latchkey and her own front door, which gave her immense pleasure. Adela envied her. Things were costing her more than she had allowed for, but she hoped, with the invincible hope of the gambler, that all would come right. Was she not engaged to Mr. Savage—to one of the richest men in England? Was she, though? Had he really meant that sudden and hateful avowal of affection for her? He came often to see her.

One night she dined with him at the Carlton and they went to the theater. When the play was over, he drove back with her to the Metropole.

"I'll come in just for one cigarette and a little talk," he said. "I never really see you. I haven't enjoyed to-night. It was too tantalizing. I want to arrange for our little wedding tour together. What is the number of your sitting room? You can take me straight up there, can't you?"

"It's too late now." She was quite indifferent whether she offended him or not. "I have no sitting room!"

"No sitting room! Good heavens, why did you come to a hotel where they can't give you a sitting room? Leave to-morrow if they don't give you one."

"Is it necessary?"

"Of course it is. I won't come to see you and sit in the hotel drawing-room. I love you. I'm not going to talk pretty, selected platitudes in a public room for all the hotel haunTERS to hear. I'm too well known for that."

"You can't come in to-night," said Adela decidedly.

"You little witch!" He laughed. "You know the way to enthrall me. Most women are cherries and over-ripe."

"I'm not even ripe," said she coldly.

"I know that. Sometimes I wish you were, and yet that is why I admire you so much. If you had been riper, I would have tired of you long ago. The way you led Crossley on, on board ship, was positively inimitable—inimitable!"

"Are you ever jealous? Could you ever be jealous?"

"Try me and see if you forget it! Don't you play tricks when I'm not here, for if you do——"

"What will you do?"

"I don't talk," he answered.

"Good night," said Adela.

How foolish it was of her not to feel gay! Life was so dull! The circumventing of the embraces of Mr. Sav-

age, fencing with him, dressing for him, fearing lest she might lose him and half hoping that she would, had brought her nerves to a state of tension.

She asked at the office for letters. There were none. It was dreary being in a strange land alone. Mrs. van Ingen had not written. Adela wrote to her again. Then she went to bed.

The days passed. Mr. Savage still squirmed because she had no private sitting room, but he had to sit in the hall or in the drawing-room. Adela dreaded being alone with Frank Savage. She disliked him—and he was going to be her husband. She could not bear to think of it, yet that had been her reason for crossing the ocean; she had come to seek her fortune, to marry money, and she had the money and the man in her grasp. Her mistake was in having thought of a husband as merely a sort of universal provider. She saw that he would be a big and irremediable fact.

Her money was dwindling. Her hotel bill, try as she would to keep it small, was generally much more than she had allowed for.

"A gentleman in the drawing-room to see you, ma'am," said a little boy, and she strolled leisurely downstairs.

But her heart did not beat leisurely when she saw that her visitor was Mr. Crossley. She hoped he had not heard her little, quick gasp.

"I'm only up for three days," he said. "I have the day before me if you will share it with me. Can you come for a drive? We can get lunch somewhere."

"I would love it," she answered.

For that day she would take out her heart and wear it on her chain. They drove down to Richmond and lunched at the Star and Garter. Then they went into the park and sat under a big oak tree. He had so much to tell her; he was like a boy.

"Are you a heartless woman?" he demanded.

"Yes," she answered. She was determined to live up to the rôle she had planned for herself, to sign her own death warrant. "I'm heartless—I'm mercenary."

"I wonder why you never talk of yourself?"

"Because I despise myself."

"You shouldn't do that. Why need you?"

She shook her head.

"I loathe talking about myself," she said. "Let me be happy to-day."

"Ah, then you are happy with me!" he said triumphantly.

"Yes," she answered, with reluctance.

"I'm perfectly happy with you," he went on. "On board ship, I thought you were charming, just a charming incident. I meant to talk to you as I would to any pretty woman. I began with that idea, or, rather, without any idea in my mind. Afterward I——"

"You?" She longed to hear the end of his sentence.

"I got hurt. Then I landed and I was alone, and I could still feel the sea air on my face and hear the throb of the engines and see the fog sweeping across the deck. And"—he laughed—"I longed to see you again. I had to come for you to-day. I want you always with me."

Her spirit writhed as she realized what she would have to throw away.

"I call that mental aberration," she said slowly, while the blood leaped and throbbed with joy all over her. He loved her. She could have died gladly. Then she grew cold. The hurricane had come. Gerty had been right; her heart was not made of granite.

"I am going to marry Mr. Savage," said Adela, and it seemed to her that her voice sounded as if it were coming through a fog. She could not see for the mist in her eyes.

"Perhaps we'd better be moving on."

He spoke after a long pause, during which Adela saw herself, her motives, and her future—"Yes, God help me," she murmured, "the future!"—in a bright light of horror and disgust.

"I suppose I had better congratulate you. You would like some tea before we start?"

"Tea! Tea would strangle me! I mean, thank you. I'm not thirsty."

He talked occasionally; sometimes she answered him and often she did not speak at all. The future bride of one of the richest commoners in England was not at all exhilarated.

"You'll be in town again. Come and see me," she said, as he helped her out of the victoria.

She clutched his hand as if she were afraid of his leaving her.

"I won't lose sight of you, I hope," said Mr. Crossley. "There is Savage. I'll be off."

Mr. Savage stood on the hotel steps; his face was red and he looked cross.

"You've been out all day with Crossley," he said insolently.

"Yes, I have," she answered.

"Well, I don't like it. I suppose you let him kiss you."

"How dare you say that?"

"I don't like my goods shopworn."

"Nor do I," she answered. "You look very shopworn now."

He gave a half-mollified laugh.

"Look here," he said. "I've been to the manager while you were out. I've told him to give you a sitting room at once. I'm not going to ask about hotel corridors waiting for any woman."

"It will cost a lot."

"Rot!" he answered. "I'll pay for it, if you like. I came to ask you to come to the opera to-night. I have a box."

"I can't go."

"Why not? It's a big night. All the royalties will be there, and——"

"I wouldn't go if they all had asked to meet me. I'm going to bed. I shall dine in my room." And she went up

in the lift, shut and locked her bedroom door, and fell to weeping.

It was of no use to call herself a fool, to hate herself, to loathe life, and to more than hate Frank Savage. It was her own fault, not his. She writhed with the torture of the thoughts in her brain; they were driving her frantic. She drank some tea; she could not eat anything. The boy brought her up some letters, the first she had received for a month. One was from Miss Furnival, who wanted her to dine at the Hen Run; only women were allowed to dwell there, hence Nancy's name for it. One was in Mr. Crossley's writing.

I think I had better not see you again. I can't bear it. I don't want to think of you as belonging to Savage, so good-by, and I hope I may never meet you again. I love you better than my life; I'd give all I possess to marry you. If you ever are in trouble, if you should ever need a man or a man's strong arm, let me know. The banker's address I gave you will always find me, and if you don't marry Savage, for Heaven's sake send me a telegram. I don't care if you don't love me. If you were free, I would do all I could to make you, and I believe I'd succeed. Yours always,

H. M. C.

Harold Melton Crossley—those were his names; she had seen them in his prayer book on the Sunday they had had church on board the *Amsterdam*. He had said good-by to her! Adela buried her face in her pillow and sobbed. The tears were so hot that they pained her eyes.

There was another letter which she had not noticed. She read it idly. It was from Mrs. van Ingen, asking her to an "at home" the next day.

"Forgive the short invitation," wrote Clara van Ingen, "I only just got your note. I have been away, and it has been following me about."

This recognition of her existence came too late to bring any feeling of elation to Adela's crushed spirit. She could not sleep, and she tossed and thought and planned all night.

Mr. Savage sent her some flowers in the morning and a diamond ring. It was a blaze of light, but it brought none to her.

At four o'clock that afternoon Adela, arrayed in a gown of soft white muslin, a simple frock trimmed with real lace and chiffon, stood in her sitting room with Mr. Savage. He had tried to kiss her, and she had only laughed at him and said:

"Don't crush my gown. It's new, and I don't want it to look shopworn."

"You will never forgive me for that."

"I think I never will." Her voice sounded as if it had been on ice for a week. "That will rather amuse you, won't it?"

"It will. No woman ever kept me hanging about her for six weeks, as you have, without any reward."

"You forget the occasional kiss, and also that I cheer you with my priceless society."

"In July," he remarked, "we'll go to— Where would you like to go? On the yacht? You're a good sailor, and we'd put into port every night."

"Not in July," she answered. "There are so many anniversaries in July that I must keep. How would September suit you?"

"Not at all. You talk as if—"

"I must be off now. Come and put me into my coupé. You dine with me to-night?"

"Yes, up here."

"No, down below. You can smoke in this room afterward."

"I wonder how Mrs. Van came to ask you to her show? They talk a lot about you and me."

"Do they?" she asked indifferently.

"So you know Mrs. van Ingen?"

"I've been introduced to her scores of times, but she always cuts me."

"I've known her nearly all my life," said Adela.

She made her entrance into the Van Ingen box—for the house was only a

square box—with a rustle and an air of bravery that was counterfeit. Mrs. van Ingen, who stood at the top of a proud eminence, the narrow staircase, was cool, not to say frigid; but Adela, who had gone to the function expecting nothing, was not disappointed when she discovered that she would get nothing in the way of friendship from Clara van Ingen. Not one kind word or look was vouchsafed her; no inquiries were made for Gerty. Adela was clearly an unwelcome guest.

"To attempt to resuscitate a friendship is like trying to warm an omelet," said Adela boldly. "I'm sure you resent my claiming any acquaintance with you." Mrs. van Ingen stared at her bold visitor. "I wouldn't have bothered you if you hadn't besought me to do so when you were in New-castle."

"Do go and have some tea."

Mrs. van Ingen corralled a man. He looked at the convoy she desired him to escort to the tea room and clearly approved of Adela's appearance.

"I'm always delighted to see my friends," said Mrs. van Ingen. "I'm going away soon, and after I return I hope to see more of you—"

"Clara van Ingen," said Adela, "don't talk rubbish. You don't want me and I shall not bother you again. After Mr. Burgess has given me some tea, I'm going home. You needn't make excuses. You know that you don't want to be bothered with me now."

Mr. Burgess got Adela a cup of cold and bitter tea. He talked as well as he could while his coat was nearly torn off him by a ramping, thirsty crowd. They were jammed in the doorway, and Adela gave a sigh as she remembered those simple little frills on her gown.

A thirsty friend waved to Mr. Burgess.

"I won't be long," he said, and elbowed his way through the mob.

"That's the woman!" said a man be-

hind Adela. "She's a beauty, isn't she? She's always with Savage."

Adela gasped. Could he mean her? Were they talking about her? If only she could get away! But she seemed to be held in a vise.

"He's infatuated," said the woman with him, laughing. "He won't marry her. He says Savages never do marry—permanently."

Adela squirmed as she felt their eyes on her face.

"She won't mind that slight omission," he said. "Mrs. van Ingen tells me she's only an adventuress. She actually came over here to find a husband. Savage was the wrong card to hold."

"It was rather brilliant of her," said the woman, with a half-grudging admiration in her voice. Then she added censoriously, "I wonder Clara van Ingen has her here. It's too much to expect us to mix with all the women Mr. Savage adores. Every one knows he never could tolerate any one decent."

Adela was not used to hearing such a delineation of her own character. No doubt they were accustomed to thinking of her as they described her. She gave them a push. They had to give her room to get away. She left most of her flounces on the floor under the man's foot, but she did not care.

"Good-by, Clara," said Adela. She stood in front of her hostess, tall and lithe, and her eyes were blazing with anger. "I think you might have told me what Gerty had written to you. I have just heard your guests talking about me. They said you had supplied the information."

Mrs. van Ingen winced. She was never brave at close quarters.

"I do not understand you."

"They said you were the agency that had supplied the news—that I am an adventuress in search of— Oh," cried Adela impatiently, "let it all go!

I must be off, but I just wanted to tell you that I am engaged to be married."

"Yes?" Clara was politely indifferent.

"To Mr. Savage," finished Adela.

"You clever woman!" gushed Mrs. van Ingen. "How on earth did you do it? Ever so many girls and mothers have tried! How did you——"

"Good-by," interrupted Adela.

This might be glory, but she felt like death!

CHAPTER IV.

The dressing of Adela took a long time that evening, and if, before she began the decorating of her person, she drank a strong brandy and soda, no one knew it except the waiter who brought it up to her.

The next day would see the signing of her death warrant. It would appear in the paper under the heading of "Fashionable Intelligence," but, nevertheless, it would be her death warrant and would run as follows:

A marriage has been arranged and will shortly take place between Mrs. Percy, widow of the late Captain Bertram Percy, Canadian Regiment, and Mr. Frank Savage, of Castletown Castle, Inverness Lodge, Banffshire, and 400 Park Lane.

Adela looked unapproachably brilliant when her guest arrived. She had ordered the champagne he liked; it cost a guinea a bottle, but she did not care. As the future wife of a millionaire, with two country places and a house in Park Lane, she need not consider the price of the wine she drank.

She felt numbed, as if some one had given her a dose of morphia. The horror of what they said about her and the pain—for Gerty had played the traitor and told Mrs. van Ingen—had turned Adela's brain into wool; her head felt stuffed. Gerty had told Clara the truth; that was what stung.

"What sort of a time did you have?" asked Savage.

He did not talk much until after the entrée, which he said was good; all the rest of the dinner he called "beastly."

"The answering of that question requires consideration," said she. "I nearly ruined my new gown, and I finished its career by trampling it to bits when I got home, I was so angry."

He grinned.

"They were horrid?"

"'Truthful' would be a better name for them. Truth is generally horrid."

"Did Mrs. Van mention me?"

"No. I heard one or two other people mention you. Have you finished? I told them to send the coffee up to the sitting room."

"This is better than sitting with the gallery," he said as he lighted a cigar, and the waiter, who had brought the coffee and poured out the liqueurs, shut the door as he went out. "Come and sit beside me? You won't?"

He got up and went over to her. He put his arms around her as she stood by the mantelpiece.

"Don't kiss me!" she said. "You shan't kiss me!" And she slipped out of his arms. "I have something to say," she went on. "To-day or yesterday—I forget which it was—I said I wouldn't marry you in July. I want to marry you next week. You can put the announcement in the papers."

"We'll go to Dover first. The papers can wait. I don't put my doings in the papers. There would be some pretty reading if I did," and he laughed.

"This excursion of yours," said Adela with a pale face and strained, staring eyes, "must go into every paper. I will have it where every one—all those women—can see it. I would, if I could, hire sandwich men to walk up and down Bond Street with notices in large letters."

"What rot!" he said, drinking his liqueur. "Did you ever try brandy and Benedictine mixed? Or was it Benedictine? It was brandy to start with,

and I forget what they put with it. I had it to-day at the lunch Molyneux gave. What a head I have! I can't remember what it was he gave me."

"You must write out a notice and send it to the papers to-night," said Adela. She had not swerved from her track. "Don't you understand that I won't be branded? Don't you know that they say I am—I won't have such things said of me, so write it out, or I will. Get a license and I'll marry you next week."

"You can get the license," he answered.

"Be sensible for once," besought Adela. "I'm so tired to-night."

"I am sensible. I am sensible of my luck and——"

"Are you? You don't know what they were saying about me to-day."

"Don't I? I can jolly well guess! They say a good many things about my women friends. But you'll soon get used to it. It's only the beginning that takes you so hard!"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Adela coldly. "Does it amuse you to think of what they said about your future wife?"

"Haven't met her yet. What do I care for the way they talk about an unknown person? My future wife must be about ten now. I'm not going to marry until I am fifty. Then I'll have a girl of twenty. What are you bothering about? Pack your trunks and let's be up and off. I'm tired of London."

"I do not understand one word you say," she answered wearily. "You say you want me to come to Dover first, and you laugh about your future wife. Are you going to poison me when you are fifty?" She spoke with an air of assumed frivolity that sounded sadder than tears.

"What rubbish you talk! I never cared anything for any one except for you. You look awfully well to-night,

you entrancing cat! I have no time to think of any one but you."

"Is it all a dream? Tell me quickly, for I don't know what you mean. Do you love me?" She was bewildered.

"Yes, of course I do. I love you better and I want you more than I have ever loved or wanted any woman."

"I told Mrs. van Ingen that I was going to marry you."

"You told her what?" shouted he.

"Don't be so noisy. I told her—what I said—that I am engaged to you. It's true, isn't it?"

She laughed a little. If only it were not so hideously true!

"True? I'm not going to marry any woman! No, it's not true! I'm much too wary a bird! What an idiot you were to give the show away—to say anything about me at all! Well"—he spoke with calm philosophy—"it won't hurt me. I can't be painted any blacker, and——"

"Good God!" cried Adela, marching across the room until she stood by him. "Tell me straight what you do mean!"

"I mean to take you abroad for a little honeymoon tour. The honey of the moon doesn't last. What else did you expect?" He carefully put some ash from his cigar into a tray by him. "Mrs. Norton"—Adela gave a moan and hid her face in the cushions—"told me why you were coming over; for adventure, she said—to get hold of a man with money. 'She's sporting,' I said when I heard that. 'She shall have adventure if I can tolerate her.' And here we are! You're coming with me to Dover on Saturday, and then we can go anywhere you like until we are bored. Then good-by——"

Adela had turned away while he was speaking. She had hidden her face in her hands. Once or twice her shoulders quivered; otherwise she gave no sign of hearing him.

"Go!" she said, standing erect. "Go at once! Listen to me. Of course you

will think that I am lying; but as sure as I know that I shall die, I never knew, until you so graphically informed me, that you did not want to marry me. I would never have tolerated you for five minutes if I had thought that! I was criminal, for I would have married you for your money—just for your money, God help me!—because I am poor. Now I am free, and you can go! I am free!"

"You must have known what——"

"How could I have known anything? I never met any one at all like you before. You thought I was clever, deep. Well, I'm not. I can't bear any more. Can't you see that I loathe you? I despise myself. I see what they meant, the shame of it! Did you tell Mr. Crossley?"

"Did I tell whom?"

"Did you tell Mr. Crossley that I was an adventurer? Did you tell him all Gerty told you—that I was trying to sell myself for money? What did you tell him?" She swept across the room and faced him. She was no longer bowed with shame and horror. She spoke with the insistence of the woman who would know. "Answer me!"

"I may have hinted my suspicions to him."

"Your suspicions!" she repeated.

He could not tell whether she spoke angrily or sorrowfully. She handed him his ring. He stood irresolutely by the door.

"Go, please," said Adela quietly.

"I'll never come back again. You've spent all your money; you have no one to help you. You're throwing away your last card, remember."

"You won't believe me when I tell you that I don't care. I see what a fool I've been. The career of the adventurer is over. Go!"

And he went.

She looked around the room. Was it really true? Had he said all those awful things? She buried her face, for

the hot shame on it hurt her. He was gone, gone forever, and but for the detestable way of his going, she could have rejoiced honestly. The next day she would leave the Metropole; she would get cheap lodgings and write stories; she would support herself. She must wash out the shame, the ignominy, the beastliness she felt in her soul. In her heart she knew that it was all her own fault, and that knowledge hurt her most.

Nancy Furnival knew that Adela was engaged to Mr. Savage. She detested him, though she had not informed Adela of that fact. Now she was not surprised to hear that the hastily arranged marriage had been broken off.

"I'm leaving the Metropole and going into lodgings," Adela told her. "I've engaged rooms in Cambridge Street—near you, Nancy."

"That's the best news I've heard since I came to London," said Nancy.

Adela looked ill, wretched.

"I'm going to write," she said. "Will you criticize my work?"

"Of course," said the girl kindly. "You look tired out. Do go to bed and have a good rest."

"Rest! I couldn't rest. I feel goaded! I feel—— Oh, my heart isn't broken. Don't look at me as if you thought me the victim of a hopeless love affair."

Adela did not write to Mr. Crossley. She felt too wretched and too much ashamed to do that. Her lodgings were as cheap as she could find. With great care her money might last until October. She began to write. Driven as she was by the fear of destitution, ideas would not come to her. When her first story was done, she took it to Nancy, who decided that it would not do for the *Vision*. Then Adela began that most awful of employments, the storming of magazine offices and the interviewing of editors.

The only balm her wounded spirit received in those days was the sight of an insertion in the *Morning Post*:

The marriage arranged between Mrs. Percy, widow of Captain Bertram Percy, Canadian Regiment, and Mr. Frank Savage, of Castletown Castle, Inverness Lodge, and 400 Park Lane, will not take place.

He had made the only amends possible to her, and she was grateful to him, but, as it happened, Nancy had paid for the insertion!

The outside world did not matter much to Adela in those days; it was all dark and lowering. She got no letters except printed ones—"The editor regrets—" and so forth; they were not cheering to receive.

At last a long story was accepted by the *Family Sentinel*. She got twenty-five pounds for it. She sent for Nancy, and to celebrate they dined at a funny little French restaurant for one and sixpence; then, to finish a delirious evening, they went to the Haymarket, for which Nancy had stalls.

Adela was growing tired of her dreary surroundings. She had no money to decorate her rooms, nor could she buy clean cretonne for the dingy sofa and chairs. She could afford to eat a little more, but she could not take a holiday. She had to remain in hot, airless London all through August. Yet in a way she felt that she was working out her salvation; she was paying her score—paying for the awful thing she had done, had meant to do—to marry Savage simply for his money. She vowed to pay bravely. Courage was the virtue she admired most; she would not cry out and be a coward.

Nancy, the proud possessor of a permanent income—she had a post on the *Weekly Argus*; she wrote the fashion column, assisted by Adela, who had an eye for clothes, while Nancy had none—had departed in the early days of hot, sultry August to the seaside. Vainly did she beseech Adela to join her.

Adela was working. Work was the best drug she had found; it left no evil effects. She had no eye for anything but copy. All through that hot month she slaved until she got—most unromantic of diseases—the chicken pox!

To an ordinary woman in ordinary circumstances, it would have been a bore; to Adela it was an appalling tragedy.

Her landlady was very cross, but bore the blow by raising her tenant's rent and congratulating herself that it was August and the house empty of other lodgers. The doctor's bill, the extras—fruit, milk purveyed by the landlady, not to mention innumerable bottles of medicine purchased at the chemist's—reduced Adela's small store of money in a most alarming way. She counted her pennies and her shillings whenever she gave herself time to think. Her work dragged and failed. It was poor and weak.

Her short stories came back. There was no one to tell her that no editor was in town to read the gems sent to him by struggling aspirants. Every one who could had left London.

September brought Nancy back to town. She was full of new ideas, new schemes for the autumn campaign. She attributed Adela's sepulchral gloom to her illness. If she had known, it was caused by meals of tea and bread in the cheapest shop Adela could find, varied by visits to the pawnshop, which were neither cheering nor conducive to a supply of endless gayety. Nancy was too busy to bother, and Adela was too desperate to want any one near her. She merely yearned to crawl out and die alone. The memory of Mr. Crossley, the man she loved, was always with her. The aching longing to hear his voice, to touch his hand, never left her. She grew half frantic in the evening, listening, listening, for a step that never came.

She never went to the Metropole for

letters. She had struck straight off that trail; she never meant to go back to it again. But there were many letters waiting her. Gerty had written; Mrs. van Ingen had called there, but had not seen the woman who had refused Mr. Savage. She believed the notice in the *Morning Post*. So did Mr. Crossley. He wrote several times and at last went to the Metropole, but no one knew where Mrs. Percy had gone. She might be in her grave for all they knew. In far-away Canada, Mrs. Norton had qualms of conscience, for Clara van Ingen had spared no detail in giving her opinion of Adela, and Gerty gathered that it was what she had said, not what Adela had done, that had produced such a torrent of wrath. Gerty felt ashamed of herself; she knew she had been a brute; she knew there was a tragic mystery surrounding Adela's disappearance, but she made no endeavor to find out her dwelling place or her method of earning a living. In course of time, the Metropole sent the letters to the dead-letter office.

By the end of October, Adela had pawned everything she possessed worth pawning, and when she had paid her landlady, she had exactly five shillings in the world. She gave up her rooms. Her writing had not produced what she had anticipated. She had arranged her future hopefully, calculating that if she could write one story in a month and get twenty-five pounds for it, she could easily do that every month. The arithmetic was correct, but her stories did not sell. She left her one trunk at Waterloo Station, and, with five shillings in her pocket, she journeyed to take counsel with Nancy Furnival. She felt a hopeless, hideous failure.

CHAPTER V.

To realize the terror of London to a woman who is alone and penniless is difficult for those who have never had to face the world on five shillings.

Adela sat in an armchair in Nancy's flat. When she had arrived, Nancy was still out, but the porter, who knew her well, had let her in with his key. She was wet and cold; it was a chilly October day, and the rain, driven by a cutting east wind, was sweeping down the empty streets, whirled by the gale.

She had not seen much of Nancy of late. They had both been busy. Adela had been careful not to ask Nancy to lunch or to tea, for half the time she had not had either meal—a bun and a glass of milk had been all she had allowed herself. Nancy had had no time to go to see her friend, and she had felt certain that Adela had a few friends with whom she amused herself. Nancy had heard of the existence of Mrs. van Ingen, but not of her disappearance from the scene.

"Gay and busy do not mix," Miss Furnival had said learnedly, and she had let Mrs. Percy alone.

Adela had been trying to coin gold out of brains and desperation. They are not of much use in a mint. Nancy had had no idea that she was destitute; she had thought that the woman whom she admired so much had an assured income, which, even if it were small, would keep the wolf from her door. Besides, Nancy was not curious.

At last she walked in.

"I'm here, Nancy," said Adela. "Can you give me your sofa to sleep on to-night? I'm adrift. To-morrow I shall go and look for a situation of some sort. What would I do for?"

"I have just been to see you. Why have you left your rooms? I've some news for you. Greaterex says he might use some stuff of yours. Send him a bundle in the morning, will you?"

"I'm a failure."

"Rubbish! You only want a cup of tea."

"It's true—I am ruined. I've spent every penny I possess in this world.

They said I was an adventuress. Well, it's true."

"The career of an adventuress would be an uncomfortable one to take up," said Nancy. "It wants so much courage and capital. You know you don't mean it."

"Yes, I do—I do."

Then Adela told the whole story, told Nancy everything that had happened since she left Canada.

"I'll make some tea," said Nancy. "It will clear our brains. You must get some work at once. What are you fit for?"

"I don't know," said Adela. "I'll answer advertisements."

"I know what you will do now," said Nancy, "and that is go to bed. You're worn out. Drink your tea, put on my dressing gown, and get into my bed."

"I won't." Adela spoke with decision. "I'll sleep on your sofa, but, if you offer me your bed, if you dare to offer it, I'll go—I'll go at once!"

Nancy laughed.

"Very well, you can have the sofa, but it's much more comfortable than my bed."

Soon Adela was actually resting. She was at peace, she was warm and comfortable. The howling wind outside yelled despair, poverty, and destitution; for the first time in six months she did not care.

The old woman who came to get Nancy's breakfast and do her room, for the munificent sum of fivepence an hour, was dispatched to buy newspapers. Adela turned her attention to studying their columns and made plans for seeking a situation. First, she resolved to go to West Kensington; some one there was advertising for a housekeeper.

A LADYLIKE PERSON wanted at once as housekeeper. Good wages to suitable applicant. Apply 24 Tregar Road, West Kensington.

Nancy had found what she thought would be a far better place; a tea shop in Holborn was advertising for lady agents to sell its teas.

"It wouldn't be half bad," said Nancy, as she ate her toast and read advertisements. "You get a directory and you find out the names of all the best people in the neighborhood. Then you ring the bell with the assurance of an acquaintance, you ask for the lady of the house, see her, talk tea; she probably buys a pound; you get paid for it, give her a receipt, and that is how it is done. I really believe it pays. They give a good percentage. You could manage it all right."

"If they thought I suited them," said Adela wistfully. "It's all so easy in theory."

"There's always that disturbing 'if,' it's a wicked word."

Nancy seized her fountain pen and rushed out.

Adela started with a long list. The West Kensington residence was hard to find. It did not look as if a housekeeper could be required for such a small establishment. There was no need to ring the bell. The door was open; the hall was crowded. Women were standing on the mat, down the steps, unable to force an entrance; they were sitting inside on the stairs; Adela felt sure that they had even got up to the roof. They were closely packed together. They glared as each new applicant joined the throng. Some were pretty. There was a gayety too loud to be real about them. Some were haggard and worn; they looked goaded by fear and by want.

"That look hasn't got on my face yet," thought Adela. "It's only in my soul now. But it will soon show, and then——"

At last a man came down the stairs. He asked questions; he told them to move up, and they crushed together closely; he shut the front door. He

was a dark, wretched-looking little person. He walked around, looking, appraising, just as if these women were slaves in a market or as if he were buying cattle. He sent five or six into a room on the left. Adela wished she could shrink and crawl out of the front-door crack and run away.

He came up to her.

"Will you follow those ladies in there?" he said. "I would like to speak to you."

She did as he asked. They were the selected band and they all were good looking. That was not pleasing to Adela. What about the talent for housekeeping? He asked no questions about it. Most of the others were hastily leaving.

The ugly little man took each one into a little office. Some were quickly dismissed; others stayed with him longer. Adela could not hear a word of what was said.

"I'm going," whispered a pretty girl. She sat on the grubby sofa—the place was filthy—beside Adela. "I don't like this; I don't like the look of him. Housekeeper!" she repeated with derision. "A fine housekeeper he wants!" She turned to depart.

"Do you think he wants a housekeeper for himself?" Adela clutched her arm. "I thought he must be an agent of some sort."

"I don't know what he wants, but I don't like the look of him," answered the girl quietly. "You're not his line. Don't you give him your name or address. I'm off. I won't wait. I was a fool to come here, but I'd be a bigger one if I stayed!"

At last it was Adela's turn for an interview.

"I hope you are not tired," said the man politely, as he gave her a chair. He seated himself very close to her. "You came in answer to my advertisement?"

"Yes," said she faintly.

"I want a housekeeper. I may as well be frank. I am a married man. My wife does not live with me, and I am cruelly lonely. I have suffered." He spoke in a semitragic tone. Adela did not like it; it was affected. He edged his chair nearer hers and put his arm along the back of the one on which she sat. "I want a charming lady to amuse me, to look after things for me. I have a beautiful flat at Earl's Court. If you could call again about six o'clock, I would take you to see my rooms."

His arm was gradually slipping off the back of her chair. She knew she ought to say something, but her tongue was tied by fright.

"I would not keep house for a man," she said firmly.

"I'm prepared to pay liberally. You would not have any menial work to do. I would see that a lady who fulfilled my requirements had all she desired."

"I could not do that, so I had better say good morning."

"Don't go. I've taken quite a fancy to you and I feel sure you would suit. Come back and see my flat before you decide. Come this evening about six o'clock—"

"No, thank you. Good morning." And she walked out.

So much for the housekeeper's post. The harmless one of selling tea was left, so she hailed an omnibus and went to Holborn. The tea warehouse was equally crowded, but the man was civil and businesslike.

"We require security," he said. "One hundred pounds would do."

"Then I won't, for I haven't one hundred pence," said Adela.

The other places on her list were in different parts of London. Undaunted, she went to each one. There was no success anywhere. She had no security, no capital, little experience.

At six o'clock, she was tired, hungry, and faint; she had eaten nothing since breakfast and she had not found any-

thing to do. What a fool she was! A housemaid's place was the very thing for her; housemaids were needed. It was too late to go to a registry office; she resolved to go to one at ten o'clock the next morning.

She dined on a poached egg and two bananas. She had no intention of going back to Nancy until the girl's dinner was over. She accepted the sofa, house room, and breakfast, but she would not dine at the Hen Ren.

"It was a hopeless day," said Nancy.

She considerably refrained from saying, "How ghastly you look!" as had been her first impulse. Adela's depressed air and brief replies told the result of her excursioning.

"I ought to have realized that, with no training, there was no place in the world for me. Even my school-teaching before I married wouldn't be any help to me here. How could I sell tea, or be in a show room, or do complexion treatment? They all want a premium or security or something in the shape of money. I might have thought of it this morning. Nancy, I'm going to be the one thing in this world that is wanted—a housemaid!"

"You'll never stand it."

"I'm strong."

"Think of living with the other servants!"

"I'll go to a small house."

"And have to carry up the coal!"

"Well, my arms are stout. I could do that at a pinch."

The registry office had plenty of situations on its books. Housemaids were needed, and Adela rejoiced. She saw a lady who was willing to pay twenty pounds a year. She engaged Adela, provided the references were satisfactory, and made an appointment to call on Miss Furnival the next afternoon.

Alas, when she came, she climbed the two flights of stone stairs that led to Miss Furnival's abode and arrived there in a bad temper! She refused

to take a servant from such a little flat; she feared that Adela could not be sufficiently trained. When Adela told her she was not living with Nancy as a servant, the lady's wrath knew no limit.

She had been deceived. Adela was a wicked woman who was trying to worm her way into respectable houses by means of a fraudulent reference. She would inform the registry office at once; it had no business to have such a person on its books. That part of her assertion she faithfully carried out, for the evening post brought a letter to say that the registry office had removed Adela Percy's name from its lists and could not assist her to find a situation.

Adela clenched her teeth and said nothing. Nancy stormed.

"It's no good," said Adela. "Nothing is any good. Waterloo Bridge is the only place for me now."

"I will go and explain."

"Leave it alone. It's only another block in the traffic," said Adela.

She tried to be gay, but another day of the same adventures, the same disappointments, reduced her proud spirit. That evening all she said was, "No luck," and Nancy considerably asked no questions.

"I brought you a *Lady's Friend*,"

Nancy said, as they were going to bed.

"You may find something in it."

"Listen, Nancy!" cried Adela, after some moments of anxious reading. "I'm going to see them." She read:

WANTED—A lodge keeper, the widow of a soldier killed in action preferred. Must be young and very active. Wages one pound one shilling a week, coal and light provided. Apply personally on Monday morning at Messrs. Graves & Gudgeon's, 44 Bedford Row, W. C."

"A lodge keeper! But your husband was not a soldier."

"An officer, a distinction without a difference. I'm strong and active. What papers have I? The notice of his death: 'I regret to inform you that

your husband, Bertram Percy, Canadian Regiment, was killed at Paardeberg on the thirtieth of January.' Won't that do? That's proof enough, and you'll do for a respectability reference this time."

"The paper doesn't say where the lodge is."

"What does it matter? It says one pound and one shilling a week; think of that! And fuel and light! I'll go if they will have me. I hope I may get it! I hope I may!"

CHAPTER VI.

It was a cold day early in November. Adela Percy got out of a third-class carriage at Hambleton Station. She had one little trunk, which contained her worldly goods. Nancy had given her the money to buy two black-and-white print dresses, some aprons, and shoes.

"I've started," she said to herself, "on another track."

Her heart was beating with terror of the unknown. It seemed weeks since she had interviewed Messrs. Graves & Gudgeon and then had been summoned by Mr. Walters, the steward of Springfield. Everything had been settled slowly, but securely. Mr. Walters had engaged her and told her what she would have to do.

"Nancy, I'm engaged as lodge keeper at Springfield," she had proclaimed after the final interview. "I have to keep the gate tidy. There's a small garden. Do you know how to work in the garden?" said that confiding man. Now, do I?"

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'That depends on what you put in the garden.' That was judicious, wasn't it? It's all right. He sends one of the undergardeners down to lay it out—that sounds as if they were preparing me for burial—in the spring and in the autumn, and I have just got to

weed it. I can weed. I have to be ready to open the gate at any time. Fancy me in the middle of the night, with my martial cloak around me, flying out. They supply the cloaks, and they have hoods; they're made of scarlet. I can wear scarlet.

"I shall go brave in scarlet,
I shall be bold in red."

"Who owns Springfield?"

"Mr. Bridlington."

"You'll be very lonely at night."

"No, I won't. There'll be a pay day to sustain me. Think of knowing that my money will come with the regularity of Saturday morning! That will be bliss!"

In spite of Adela's gayly assumed confidence in the future, she stood on the station platform a forlorn figure, huddled up in a cloak. Hope and the pride of life had left her.

"Is there a cart here from Springfield?" she said to the solitary porter.

"Yes, outside. Shall I take your box?"

"Please do."

There was a dogcart waiting. The step looked as high as the wall of a garden. A young groom was driving.

"You are Mrs. Percy? For Springfield?" he asked. "Jump up. Lots of room for the luggage behind."

She presented the porter with sixpence and they drove off.

She could not talk; she sat there tongue-tied.

At last he spoke.

"How do you think you will like it down here? Ever been lodge keeper before?"

"No. I think I'll like it."

"Me and my missis live at the farther lodge. She's been cleaning yours. Mr. Bridlington had it all painted and done up for you. There's a bit of furniture in it. It's rough, but it's clean. It isn't a bad billet. It's lonely a little and you

never can leave your gate. Did they tell you that?"

"Then how can I do my shopping?"

"The baker calls; so does the butcher. And they send milk from the farm. The other stuff—well, I buy tea and bits of things for my missis on Saturday night. I can get you anything you need then."

"Thank you," said Adela. "What is the name of my lodge?"

"The East Lodge, Springfield Park. You have to carry the post bag up to the big house every afternoon. The postman goes in the morning, but at four he leaves the bag at your door and you have to take it up. You won't mind that?"

"I won't mind anything. I'm so glad to be in the country."

The East Lodge was built of gray stone. It was covered with the bare branches of rose trees. There were two flower beds in front of the door; the bulbs were already sprouting in them.

"It's pretty in summer," he said. "It looks dreary now."

A young woman came to the door, evidently the man's "missis." Adela and she carried in the trunk. There was a good fire in the kitchen. A front room was arranged as a sitting room—just the stiff cottage arrangement that no doubt was considered the correct thing in the circles Adela had joined. Upstairs there were two large bedrooms.

Mrs. Frame was young and pretty. She poured out all her troubles to Adela. She had a two-year-old child and a baby of a few months; the small quarters were trying, and the fear that the increasing family would make Mr. Bridlington turn them out was a constant worry to her and to Bill, the husband.

"Since old Mr. Bridlington died, nothing has been altered," said Mrs. Frame. "They say the heir, his nephew, will just keep things as they were. But

I'm afraid, and so is Bill. Well, now, if you think you won't want me any more, I must go home. Our lodge is about half a mile across the park. Come over to-morrow when you take up the post bag. Oh, here's your cloak. Mr. Walters sent it down." She put on her own red one with the hood.

"How pretty you look!" said Adela involuntarily.

Mrs. Frame laughed.

"I expect you've seen better days," she said, gazing at Adela. "They did say Mr. Walters told some one that you were a lady. I begin to think it's true."

Adela was left alone to find out things for herself. The cottage had been newly papered with simple flower papers. The paint was white. It was all bare and sweet and clean. She unpacked and then made herself a cup of tea. She found bread and butter in the little larder and some fresh eggs; so she boiled one and then cleared away the things and washed them up. It was delightful—just like playing at keeping house.

She sat down by the fire to think and to feel glad before she went to bed. First she had to save up and pay Nancy; then—well, then she would feel free again and out of debt. She went to bed after locking the windows and the doors. She had reached a haven, a haven of peace; it was good to feel at rest.

An uneventful circuit of days rolled by. She did her own work; she learned, taught by Mrs. Frame, to wash her own clothes—at first she had only scrubbed the skin off her hands; she cleaned and sang and was happy. Her red cloak and hood were very becoming to her; health and work and food were giving her a color; she was better looking than she had ever been before, but she did not think of it. Nancy had promised to come down as soon as she could get away. Adela had the house

cleaned over and over again and her room ready. She found plenty of employment and she never felt dull, though sometimes she did feel solitary. Mrs. Frame had accepted her as a lady and came down to advise and to help. Adela saw no one else. She found she could help her kind adviser by going up and taking the baby to spend the day with her. Her writing prospered in the peace of the country, and the editor of the *Family Sentinel* was glad to accept a story and to ask for more. Then she paid Nancy.

One afternoon late in December Adela got a shock. The days were very dark. She had lighted her lamp and was playing with Mrs. Frame's baby when she heard a shout of "Gate!"

She seized her key—all the gates at Springfield were kept locked—threw on her red cloak, and rushed out.

"Gate!" yelled a man impatiently again.

"Coming, sir," called Adela, using the word she had been drilling herself to say for some time. In her haste, she left the front door open, and in the dancing firelight the interior of her room showed as clearly to the man on the horse as if he had been inside it.

She supposed it was Mr. Bridlington returning from hunting. She opened the gate as quickly as possible and waited for him to pass through. He rode close beside her, so close that his horse almost touched her. She felt his eyes on her face; it was clear in the light from the cottage door. She gave him a cursory glance and did not raise her eyes again, for he was looking at her; he was staring hard at her. She knew him. It was Mr. Crossley! He had not recognized her; he would not be able to do that. She pulled her hood over her face. He was staying at the big house. Oh, how she hoped he would soon go away!

"Good night," he said as he rode away.

"Good night, sir," said Adela. She said the "good night" quietly and the "sir" loudly. If only the ground would swallow her! But perhaps he had not seen her face. He gave a glance at the open door of the cottage as he rode by it.

Adela went in. She had lost her gayety. What did anything matter? She did not, she would not, believe that she had seen Mr. Crossley, yet her heart said that she had seen him.

Two or three days passed and she neither heard nor saw anything of him. Either he was not there or else he had forgotten all about her.

There was a large party staying at the big house, and she had to open the gate frequently to men who were going to or coming back from the meet.

After this Adela was never alone. She always had one of the Frame children with her; to be alone meant that she would have time and opportunity for thought.

"Mr. Bridlington was asking me if you had any children," said Bill when he came one afternoon to fetch the baby home. "I suppose he saw you with one of mine."

"I would not know Mr. Bridlington if I saw him," she said. "I suppose I have opened the gate for him."

"Well, I'd better be taking the youngster home. Good night, ma'am," and Bill stumped off.

She sat by the fire. She was tired of writing and she had done all the work in the house for that day. She felt loath to stir. Time—which had lulled the memory of the past torture and poverty to rest in her mind—brought back the consciousness of the happiness she had missed. She ached to have a little of it. She was young; she was strong; she would live until she was ninety or a hundred, in this wayside haven! She had peace and calm, but no love, no happiness. And she felt that she would never have them.

She looked at the room. It was dainty. She had valiantly eschewed the temptation to have tea as if she were in a station with the train going to start; she had a little tea table with a white cloth on it, dull-blue cups and saucers, and a blue tea cozy. The fire in the grate was good and the brasses shone; she cleaned them well every day. The sofa, changed from a hideous monstrosity by blue-and-white chintz and blue-and-pink cushions, stood near the fire. The few prints on the walls were all of ships; she had picked them up in Hambledon on one of the few occasions when Mr. Walters had given her a day off to go shopping. She loved the sea—the sea had given her what she had wanted and she had not accepted the gift. Two old brass candlesticks left by the last inhabitant of the lodge held candles. The room was not what one would have expected to see in a four-roomed cottage.

Adela wore a black-and-white-print gown and a large white apron. The gown fitted her beautiful figure perfectly; it was plain and a little long, and a band of insertion encircled her throat. In theory, she was arrayed like an upper housemaid, plainly and simply; in reality, she looked like a duchess ready to act in private theatricals.

There was a knock at the front door. It opened into the sitting room. She had not heard any one call, "Gate!" It might be Bill, though he always came to the kitchen door. She had no wish that any curious, casual person should pry into her room and so into her life. The big table in the corner, covered with manuscript, showed that she had a different profession from the ordinary dweller in a lodge. She opened the door; there stood Mr. Crossley!

"Did you want me to open the gate, sir?"—the "sir" was faint—said Adela from behind the intrenchment of the door. "I will do it at once."

"I have come to see you. Don't pretend you don't know me. I recognized you in the half light the other night. I've not been able to get away from Pitts and the others since then. I have something to say, and I can say it better if you will allow me to come in. Some passer-by might wonder to whom you are talking if you keep me to cool on the doorstep."

"Come in, then. Not that I care what they say, but I should hate any gossip. You are staying at the big house?"

"I am. What a greeting! Aren't you glad to see me? I've tried to find you everywhere. I'm more than glad to come across you here in safety."

She gripped the back of a chair. She had to hold on to something. She felt as if he had brought a warrant for her execution.

"You will tell—you will tell who I am and where you met me! You will ruin me!" She stopped. "Do you know?"—her tone was quiet, yet full of woe—"that before I came here, I nearly starved—that I was driven to this? You will tell Mr. Bridlington and he will turn me out! Oh, what am I saying?"

"Is that your opinion of me?"

"No, you might do it accidentally. If you knew what torture meant and then after it peace, you would—Please go away from here and don't come back again!"

"I promise to say nothing about you to any one. But they were all talking about you. Pitts saw you one day when you brought up the letters. He——"

"I don't mind what he says."

"Why won't you treat me as a friend? Have I ever been anything else?"

"No. Don't you see that I must live my life quietly? If any one had seen you coming here now, they would say that——"

"I quite see. And now sit down. I can't until you do. I've brought you a

message from Mr. Bridlington. I come in peace, not in war."

"Why does Mr. Bridlington use you as a messenger? Sit on the sofa." She smiled, and all her old charm came back. She was the Adela he loved again, but he did not look at her because he could not bear to do so. "Have you had any tea?"

"I would like some now."

"I'll make it. No, don't come with me. I'm used to it."

"Do you mean to say that you do all your own work? You clean the house? Surely you should get some one—some woman—in."

"And let the whole world know I am masquerading? No, thank you. I do everything and I like it." She glanced at him from her big blue eyes shaded by such long lashes. "I really like it, and I think"—she spoke modestly—"that it suits me."

"Yes, it does suit you."

"You will not be able to eat any dinner," she said, laughing, as he ate bread and butter and drank three cups of tea.

"I don't mind that. Besides, we don't dine until a quarter past eight to-night. They expect some people from town."

"And now for the message. Has my master any fault to find with the way I clean the yard? Or open the gate? Or weed the flower beds? There are no weeds in winter."

"Your master has no fault to find with you. He hates the fate that sent you here, for he knows you aren't strong enough for this life. Walters told him all about you. My message is that on Sunday morning, if you would care to go to church, you are welcome to. No one ever wants this gate opened on Sunday. Bill will drive you to Hambledon in the cart and put it up at the inn, so you can both go to church. Mr. Bridlington thinks you must be lonely and that a little gentle

intellectual treat would be good for you."

"It is kind of him and I'd like it extremely. I suppose he wouldn't mind if once or twice I stayed with the Frame children and let Mrs. Frame go with her husband? She does want to show her new hat."

"Don't let the exchange take place too often. Otherwise, I think it will be all right."

"He must be a decent sort. How did he come to think of it?"

"Oh, every one said you were superior, you know."

"Superior! Is that what they call me? I'm not at all superior."

"You're not a typical soldier's wife. Why didn't you speak to me that night you opened the gate for me?"

"Why didn't you speak to me?"

"I looked at you as hard as I dared."

"I looked, too, until I——"

"Until you let your eyes fall. Shall I tell you why I didn't speak?"

"Do."

"No, I think I can't now. I went to Bill Frame and asked questions about you."

"Mr. Bridlington went, too. Bill told me."

"Did he?" Mr. Crossley was quite indifferent.

He stayed until it seemed as if he would have to run to get back and dress for dinner.

"May I come again?"

"No, thank you."

"I must and I will. Let me come in a week."

"Well, then, in a week."

"A whole week is awfully long. Couldn't you let me come on Wednesday—this is Thursday—or on Monday. That is a good day, and you can tell me how you liked going to church."

"No, this day week. I have work to do and visitors are unsettling."

"I wish I could unsettle you. You

are as firm as a rock," he remarked sadly.

"Will you give Mr. Bridlington my humble respects or my humble duty and thanks for his kindness? I don't know how I ought to phrase it. Tell him my humble duty and thanks; that sounds best."

She made him a curtsy; she would not shake hands with him.

"When you're serious, you're so much more dangerously attractive than when you're laughing. Don't make me a curtsy again. I think, before I go, that it's only fair to tell you I am Mr. Bridlington."

"You are Mr. Bridlington! What have you done with your other name?"

"The old man was my uncle, and he left all he had to my brother and me on condition that we took the name. I didn't tell you in town because I didn't know whether it was really true."

"Wait!" she called. "Wait! I want to ask you if you knew— Did you know who Mrs. Percy was? Was I taken here, out of pity? Did you tell Graves & Gudgeon?"

"No."

"Then it was not your charity?"

"No. They sent me a list of names. I saw yours. They said you seemed suitable. I wrote, from purely sentimental reasons, 'Take Mrs. Percy if possible.' To tell you the truth, I could not bear to think of any one with your name being destitute. Then I forgot all about it until you opened the gate. In a week I will answer any more questions you may have ready. I'll be shockingly late now."

He vanished round the back of the lodge and into the path that led to the big house.

CHAPTER VII.

Adela, alone, was amazed and ashamed. He had said that the engaging of Mrs. Percy had been inspired by purely sentimental reasons! Everything

was lurid, yet it was lurid with joy. And then joy crept away from her mind and astonishment and sorrow took its place. The sorrow came in because she knew that she would not be able to renew her friendship with him. A landowner cannot know his lodge keeper, and contraband visits she must not permit, though the idea of any sort of a visit from him filled her with rapture. Still, she could not be labeled again.

"You were an adventuress," shouted something inside her brain. "You will be an adventuress again—first for money and then for love."

Some horrid little goblin laughed as he said it. The situation was an impossible one; she could not have any further intercourse with Mr. Bridlington. He would understand.

Bill called for her on Sunday morning and they drove to Hambledon. The seats set apart for the servants of the big house were on the side of the church. The remainder of the congregation had a very good view of them all. Mr. Bridlington sat in the front of the church and looked at her. She resolved that the next Sunday should find her sitting down by the door, where she could see and not be seen.

A whole week passed and he did not come near her. Some men think a woman likes to be obeyed; she does not, if she cares for the man. To disregard her orders needs a certain amount of audacity and self-confidence.

The next Sunday morning Adela asked the old pew opener to give her a seat by the door. That afternoon the rattle of wheels and a shout of "Gate" brought her out. It was Mr. Bridlington driving. Mr. Pitts was with him.

She opened the gate and stood there waiting for them to go out; she did not dare lift her eyes.

"I was sorry not to see you in church this morning," said Mr. Bridlington. "I hope you were not ill."

"No, sir," said Adela faintly. Then, not wishing him to think her ungrateful, that she had not taken advantage of the trap so thoughtfully placed at her disposal—afraid also lest the privilege of an undisturbed contemplation of his straight back and his head where the hair crinkled a little should be taken away from her—she said: "I was there. I sat in the back of the church. I like it better. I am very grateful to you for letting me go."

He drove on. She shut and locked the gate.

"I say, Bridlington, you have a beauty in your lodge! Is she the victim of an uncontrollable passion for you?" asked Mr. Pitts. "Why does she live here? Why does—"

"Oh, go and ask her," answered his host with impatience. "She's a widow; her husband was killed in South Africa. I can't do much. You know I tried to go with every contingent they sent from Canada? Yes, but they wouldn't have me, so all I can do is give the widows of soldiers work when there is any going. That's why she is in the East Lodge."

"I must take a little walk there, become faint, and then she'd have to take me in."

"I beg you won't do anything of the sort," said Mr. Bridlington stiffly. "She would resent it."

"Now, look here!" said Pitts. "You know that I would call on any pretty woman in the neighborhood. Why shouldn't I call on her? What difference does the fact of her living in the lodge make? She's a lady."

"Of course."

"Then I shall call on her." Pitts spoke with determination. "If she resents my intrusion, I'll come away. She can only fire a saucepan at me," he added with comfortable assurance. "I understand that is what they do when they quarrel in the married quarters in barracks. She isn't a soldier's widow.

You've been swindled! She's in love with some man down here and she's only masquerading. She may be hiding from justice."

"Don't be a fool," said Mr. Bridlington concisely; and Mr. Pitts was silent, but he thought all the more.

The rector of Hambledon church had noticed the new beauty in the Springfield pew. On Wednesday afternoon, having made inquiries as to the locality in which the lady resided and her station in life, he started to go to the East Lodge to pay a parochial visit. He had heard that she was a superior person, evidently in great trouble, having lost her husband in South Africa.

The Reverend Augustus Ponsonby believed in the celibacy of the clergy, candles, and incense. He was a very handsome man and a great favorite in the parish. He found Mrs. Percy preparing her tea. He saw her room and he was surprised; he admired her lithe figure, her glorious eyes and heavy black hair. He stayed to tea—stayed to tea with the lodge keeper! He never had tea even with the farmers' wives! He forgot all about her profession as he watched and listened to her. She was so delightfully fresh, different; she did not ask him about the hangings, or the reredos, or any of the things that all the ladies of the parish kept on tap for him. How tired he was of them all! How weary of conversation about missions! He was not shocked when Mrs. Percy refused to take a class in his Sunday school and said that she did not want to.

The master of Springfield had been keeping a tight hand on his inclinations. He wanted to go down to the lodge every day and all day, but he knew very well that such a course would be foolish. He knew how people would talk if they saw him visiting the pretty lodge keeper. Therefore, he surrounded himself with a large party. He had invited a lady down to whose

charms Mr. Pitts was the last victim; this was a good way of keeping Pitts out of mischief. Pitts resented these efforts on his behalf and was restive. Mr. Bridlington watched him.

One night, after every one had gone to bed, the two men were in the smoking room.

"It's no use your following me and watching me, Bridlington. I know why it is. You know that I want to go down to the lodge to see that charming woman. I warn you I'll go as soon as I have a chance. You can't watch me forever."

"Do think of her!"

"I've been doing nothing else ever since I saw her. The way those eyelashes lay on her cheek——"

Mr. Bridlington interrupted him.

"I meant that you should think of her reputation. No one must see you going there. If she were to be talked about, it would—it would kill her. You can go and see her if you like, but think of her! She has had an awful life—grief, poverty, pain, and distress. Let her be. She is in a haven now."

"Don't you want to go and see her?"

"Always, though I don't go. She told me not to come."

"And she despises you now for obeying her. You've been?"

"Once."

"I intend to discover for myself whether she is a designing minx or a suffering angel. I'll escape your tender care." And Mr. Pitts grinned with great joviality.

All the house party had gone away. They had found Springfield dull; its owner was preoccupied. Harold had only the society of Mr. Pitts, whom he had besought to stay. The truth was that he felt he dared not be alone with Mrs. Percy so near; there were scandalous tongues everywhere.

On the Wednesday afternoon on which the laceration of Mr. Ponsonby's heart took place, Mr. Bridlington went

out to ride. He was alone. He had seen the departure of Mr. Pitts early in the afternoon. Pitts had gone to tea at Lady Esther MacAdam's. Harold had been bidden, too—Lady Esther had daughters—but he had refused. He wanted to ride over the downs to the north of Springfield; he felt that a good, long gallop would take some of the restlessness out of his body and his mind.

Riding over the short grass, temptation seized him. What was to prevent his going to her and explaining the situation? He thought he might safely announce, merely as an item of interest, that he loved her as much as ever and that he intended to wait for her to marry him, since she had not promised to marry any other man.

He took his horse back to the stable and started down to the lodge. As he reached it, he saw a stealthy figure glide out of the shrouding rhododendrons and move close up to the window; evidently, whoever it was wanted to see through the crack of the blind. Here was a clear case for prompt interference by the proprietor of the estate. Harold crept forward and grabbed the window gazer by the arm.

"What do you mean? What are you doing here?"

To his surprise, his captive said with amiability:

"Shut up! Let go my arm!"

It was Pitts, whom he had thought safe with Lady Esther—Pitts calmly looking through the crack of the blind at Mrs. Percy! He was unrepentant and unalarmed.

"Get out of this!" said Mr. Bridlington firmly.

"I won't. I've just as much right here as you have. I told you I meant to come. Don't make a row. Look in! Doesn't she look sweet? An absolutely lovely dream?"

Feeling that he could have scalped his friend and enjoyed his torture with

joy indescribable, Bridlington pushed him away to get a chance at the crack himself. He muttered something, but he continued to look.

There was Adela exactly as Pitts had described her; she was knitting. A tea table—the tea table of Harold's most precious recollection—stood by her, and opposite sat a manifestly infatuated person, the Reverend Augustus Ponsonby.

"He's staring at her as if he would like to eat her," he remarked with great disgust.

"Let me see," and Pitts shoved him away. "Don't be so selfish; you want to keep it all for yourself. I say, I think we'd better go boldly up to the door and call. If we stay growling out here, she'll send the parson out to look for the dog fight, or perhaps she might throw water at us from the windows." He laughed loudly, forgetting the need for caution in his amusement.

"Now, what's this? Come, get out of here!" Mr. Bridlington turned with astonishment to find his steward, Walters, standing behind them. "We don't allow tramps here. You'd better move on."

"I—er—er—am just calling on Mrs. Percy on a matter of business," said Harold in a tone of humility, and his words were halting.

Mr. Pitts could not speak; he had given away to a paroxysm of laughter.

The embarrassment of Walters was tremendous.

"Oh, sir! I beg your pardon! I didn't know you were here." His humility was immense. "I just—I often give an eye to the lodge when I'm passing. Mrs. Percy doesn't know, sir, and I won't do it again if it interferes in any way—"

"I hope you'll do it as usual. It doesn't interfere in any way," said Harold. "You're quite right; the place is lonely, too lonely."

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir," and the

steward vanished, but not before Mr. Pitts said gayly:

"I, too, am keeping an eye on Mrs. Percy."

"Shut up!" said Bridlington. "Come, we'll have to knock at the door now."

CHAPTER VIII.

A double knock startled Adela. Mr. Ponsonby jumped; he said with uneasiness:

"I must be moving on."

She opened the door, and when she saw the two rather shamefaced visitors, said:

"Did you want to speak to me?"

"Yes," said Harold. "Did you hear rather a disturbance outside your window?"

He introduced Mr. Pitts and they came in. Adela was not perturbed; she felt secure in the presence of so many people, and she was glad to see him. She forgot that Mr. Ponsonby made talking his profession; he never talked scandal—he only lamented the awful circumstances of some parishioner's fall from grace. He gazed with curiosity at Mr. Bridlington, whom he had wanted to meet. He disapproved of the way Adela received the two men; he disapproved of their coming at all; he disapproved of everything, his own feelings included. Having just felt that he could almost relinquish his most cherished and attractive conviction, his belief in the celibacy of the clergy, if she had been in a different position, an unwonted passion of wrath seized him when these intruders entered.

They accepted her offer of tea, and she, forgetting that the past was dead—she had often assured herself of that, and it was queer of her to be so oblivious of what she had hitherto considered an unalterable fact—began to talk to Harold in the old, attractive way, not at all in the manner of the woman who looked after the lodge!

"Do you remember the pleasant tea parties we had on board the *Amsterdam*?" inquired Harold, forgetting the absolute necessity for silence in regard to any former meeting between himself and Adela.

"Of course I do," she answered. "And the day you——"

Mr. Pitts coughed and asked if he might have a drink of water. The situation was growing interesting, but he did not intend that Mr. Ponsonby should share it. What fools they were to let any one know that they had met before!

The rector rose to go. He pressed Adela's hand with unnecessary violence and asked Mr. Bridlington for a subscription to the choir fund, which Harold, with great liberality, gave then and there.

They stayed some time after the departure of Mr. Ponsonby. Pitts thought Mrs. Percy was even more charming than he had dared imagine. He was very quiet, leaving most of the talking to Harold. Pitts was thinking of the ready-made scandal that the rector had taken away with him to relate at his next dinner party.

They walked home just in time for dinner.

"Do you want to marry her?" asked Pitts.

"Yes."

"Well, then, hurry up and tell her so. Can't you muzzle that parson somehow? He'll tell you knew her before; he'll create such a stir as hasn't been known here since the war with France, when they were afraid Bonaparte was coming. You must acknowledge, Bridlington, it sounds fishy. Can't you hear him telling every one? The pretty woman who takes care of Mr. Bridlington's East Lodge is a former friend of his! He met her on board ship. He goes down to see her after dark, and so forth, and so forth. Can't you guess the rest?"

"What a fool I was to say anything! A fool to go and see her at all with that prowling hyena about! I never thought there could be danger from him!"

"There is the worst. I have heard of him before."

The next evening the rector dined at Lady Esther MacAdam's. As a great secret, he related his experience when calling on Adela; he lamented the infatuation of Mr. Bridlington; he hoped there would be no disgrace to the county. Lady Esther promised, though shocked, to guard the absorbing item of news safely.

For some days Harold dared not look down the East Avenue. Even to drive past the gate he would have considered foolish, so worried was he by Mr. Pitts' words.

"Out in the West," he remarked, when Pitts began another sermon on the same text, "no one would have said nasty things about me or about her if I spoke to her, just because she lives there and I live here. I would have shot any man who dared."

"Perhaps so. But you forget the thing that kills the world's continued belief in a woman's virtue is when she, for want of money, is obliged to leave one position and take a lower one. It would not inatter if she were ugly. It's odd, but no one would say anything about her if she had taken the dower house and announced that she had met you on board ship. There's nothing they won't say while she inhabits your lodge!"

Harold did not answer these wise remarks. He waited impatiently for Sunday and a sight of her.

The church was full that morning, and in the MacAdams' pew, which was next the Bridlingtons', Harold saw Frank Savage!

Mr. Bridlington cast an anxious glance behind him. He could not tell whether she was there. He hoped she had not come, but she had.

After church she walked over to the inn to wait for the cart. She was standing by the gate, not thinking of the present or of her surroundings, when she heard a hatefully familiar voice.

"Mrs. Percy, how are you? How strange this is! Are you—is it possible you are the lady of the lodge? The story I heard sounded like a pleasant romance—untrue, of course. Now it seems somewhat like an unpleasant French novel."

"Since when have you found French novels unpleasant?"

"I'm staying with Lady Esther MacAdam," Savage continued. "I was awfully amused when I heard you were the lady about whom Lady Esther was telling naughty tales. How brilliant of you to come here! To live in his lodge! You *were* clever!" There was sickening admiration in his tone. "I told Lady Esther all about you last night."

"Couldn't you have been silent for once in your life?"

"I had to live up to the names you so kindly bestowed upon me just before we parted. I will come and see you when I can safely get away from the espionage of my hostess." He dropped his voice cautiously. "I never have forgotten you. I think we might come to terms—now."

"I despise you," said she calmly. She was frightened, but she did not show it. "How did Lady Esther MacAdam know of my existence?"

"Through Mr. Bridlington, I suppose. How can I tell? But don't be angry with him for telling such an excellent joke. I wouldn't have resisted the temptation if I had been in his place. They all know now."

Adela walked into the stable yard of the inn, where Bill was waiting for her, and got into the trap. She did not speak to him. Once or twice he glanced at her face. Her lips were hard set and she looked as if she had been crying. "I think we might come to terms

—now," sounded in ceaseless repetition in her brain. He! That brute! Had Harold told? Never, never would she believe that of him. It must have been that little rat he brought with him. Poor Mr. Pitts!

Late that evening she was working to finish a story, for she knew that she would have to go out on the tramp again and would need all the money she could get.

"Surely," she thought, "I have paid. There can't be any more scores to settle."

She heard a voice shout peremptorily, "Gate!"

She went out. There stood Mr. Ponsonby.

"Good evening," said Adela.

"Let me in. I want to talk to you."

"It's too late. You can say what you want to say here."

"I can't talk here."

"Very well, then. If you can't talk from the gate, you can go away."

"Are you aware that I have heard awful things about you? I must tell you. You knew Mr. Bridlington before. They say that you are here for no good."

"I know all that," she answered. "They say that I came over to get married and that I am an adventuress."

"I heard him refer to a former acquaintance with you, and so I told Lady Esther. When I mentioned your name to her, there was a man there named Savage. He seemed to know you."

"When you mentioned my name? So you told her. Did you by any chance add that Mr. Bridlington came here the afternoon you paid your first visit?"

"Yes."

"She knew nothing about me before that?"

"I really don't know. She seemed surprised. Why think about her? Think of yourself. Go into a sisterhood, a place where you can think——"

"And so you told—you, whose pro-

fession is Christ's charity! How could you?"

She walked away and shut and locked the doors and windows of the cottage, and where he went and what he did she neither knew nor cared. The only redeeming feature of it all was she had discovered who was the informer. There was no doubt that Mr. Ponsonby was guilty.

The atmosphere of the big house was sultry. A gloom—a sepulchral gloom—had fallen on Harold; also on Mr. Pitts. The former smoked incessantly and was morose; the latter fidgeted and muttered wrathful words.

"And that scandalmonger is the rector!" said Pitts. "As for Mr. Savage, a few moments alone with him and a horsewhip would give me complete joy. Still, he makes no profession. But Ponsonby—he preaches to us every Sunday!"

"You are sure, Pitts, quite sure, that she won't see me?"

"Miss Furnival arrived this morning. I had a little conversation with her. Mrs. Percy absolutely refuses to see any one. She's broken up, and I don't wonder. Miss Furnival told me what an awful time she has had. If I had a chance, I could knock some of Savage's teeth out and not feel sorry!"

Harold grunted.

"I'm going to the lodge. I won't sit here."

"She refuses to see you."

"I'll have an interview with Miss Furnival."

Harold went to the lodge. It was a long time before the door opened in answer to his knock. When Nancy arrived, she said:

"She can't see you."

"Come outside and let me talk to you. Look here! You are her friend. I love her. What are you going to do to help me?"

"I can't see that your loving her does

any good. They would only say that the attitude of the county toward you had forced you to marry her. How can you kill the scandal? No one would call on her here."

"I don't want them to—I mean, it doesn't matter. I'm not going to live here forever. The world is wide."

"And tongues are long."

"You must help me to cut them off."

"I'll do my best. You don't deserve it, but I'll work for her. She says she's going away with me when I have to go back to town. She is terrified—terrified lest Mr. Savage may turn up here. He said he would. He was rude, insulting!"

"I'm glad you told me. I'll look after that."

And so the gamekeepers patrolled round and round the East Lodge. All the people on the estate wondered, and all the world talked scandal.

Adela had summoned pride and all its attendant swains to her aid. She had assured Nancy that she would never see Mr. Bridlington, and Nancy, who knew little about men and less about women, believed what Adela said. She could not guess that Adela wanted what she said she didn't want. She did not know that Adela listened and waited for his step with a sick longing, that her heart was sore for one word from the man she loved. The hurricane had broken, even as Mrs. Norton had predicted, and it was devastating, as hurricanes usually are.

"Don't you believe he only thinks he ought to see me?" asked Adela.

Nancy thought so and said so.

"I'm too proud to listen," announced Mrs. Percy with her head up. "I'm not done for. The *Family Sentinel* will take everything I write. You and I can live together. I'll come to London."

"And forget all about these wretched men." Nancy felt so wise! "You'll be happy when once you get away from here."

One night Adela heard stealthy steps outside the house. She got out of bed and opened the little window gently and noiselessly. It was Mr. Bridlington. She watched him for a long time.

CHAPTER IX.

If ever a man was distracted, that man was Harold Bridlington. He felt like an active dog whom every one tells to lie down. Between the advice and wisdom purveyed by Nancy—not to mention her ill-concealed disapproval of his conduct—and the wise admonitions of Mr. Pitts, who was sensible, if despairing, Harold would willingly have seen his advisers in the train or, better still, on board a ship without a return ticket. Nancy kept Adela out of his way; he knew Nancy influenced her against him. It was hard, for the only way out of it all was to have a long explanation with Adela.

After wasting his breath in arguing with them, he maintained a stolid and morose silence, but he bided his time.

Suddenly Adela resumed her duties. She began to take the post bag up to the big house again; Nancy had been doing it for her. Afternoon after afternoon passed, and she made her way there unmolested. Harold was quite aware of her occupation, but he was lying low.

One afternoon a drizzling rain was falling; there was snow on the ground and the rain changed to sleet; it was very cold. Adela started up to the house with the post, leaving Nancy asleep by the sitting-room fire.

Harold was wandering among the thick trees that stood between the lodge and the house. He saw Adela coming from a rock behind a screening bush. About two hundred yards behind her, following her, was a man. Who was he? The stranger slipped on a piece of ice, and swore. The voice was Frank Savage's. Harold caught up

with Adela. She started as she felt him grip her arm.

"Don't make a noise! Savage is following you! Turn to your left!"

She obeyed him. He led her through the trees, and they went back, away from the house. Savage passed them quite close; he was walking faster, afraid of missing his quarry.

"Come on here."

Harold held her hand. It was a passive hand; he could feel little electric thrills up and down his own arm. He took her over to a big rock that made a shelter from the wind and the rain.

"He must not find me here, with you!" she cried. "He will say—What will he not say?"

"Keep quiet and he won't find you," said Harold.

"Or you?"

"Or me. I want to talk to you. Nancy says you hate me. She says you won't see me. It's only fair to give me a chance; even a man tried for murder has some one to defend him. May I defend myself?"

"Yes."

"Well, first thing, I love you—love you—love you!" He set his teeth hard as he spoke. "I want to marry you. I know—Miss Furnival told me—that you blame me for all this. I would give all I possess to have prevented it. I never dreamed the rector could be so horrible. The rest you know. I mean you know that Savage told he had met you when he heard Lady Esther laughing about the pretty Mrs. Percy."

"Where is he now? Has he gone up to the house?"

"He won't follow you here."

But a crashing of boughs and a heavy footfall proclaimed that Mr. Savage had struck a track of some sort. Adela involuntarily drew nearer Harold.

"Don't let him find me! Don't let him find me!" she besought.

He took her hand; she did not with-

draw it, and he ventured to put one arm around her.

"Keep still," he said.

He could hear the snorting and puffing of the man among the bushes, and then—welcome sound!—the voice of Hatch, the head gamekeeper.

"Now, then, what are you doing here?" said Hatch.

"I'm Mr. Savage, from Lady Esther MacAdam's."

"Then, sir, I'll show you the way home." Hatch was polite, but firm.

"We're safe." Harold let his arm fall away from her. "Now give me an answer."

"It was true," she said. "I must explain about Mr. Savage. I've been a fool, and I did say that I was coming over to get married. I had no money and no home, so I took all I had——"

"I've heard all about that from Miss Furnival. I want your future. I want you to spend it with me. I don't want your past annotated by yourself."

"I'm horrid. You mustn't think I'm better than I am. I can't marry you."

"Why not? In a month I sail for Canada. I want to look after the ranch. My brother is there, and he is anxious to get over here. Will you come with me?"

"No—I won't have you sacrifice yourself for my sake. I—— Why do you make me say these things? I have no reputation. I—— Oh, can't you see you mustn't think of marrying me! It wouldn't be right! Think of the county people!"

"What have they got to do with it?"

"You have to live here. It's your home."

"Not at all. This is my brother's place. I've just been looking after it for him. It was not left to me. I prefer the ranch, so—the old man knew it—my share was money. I can give you bread and butter, but not a place and a mansion like the big house. A home on the ranch and love—are all I have

to offer you. If you are still what you said you were—in search of a fortune—you will refuse them. If——"

"Why didn't you tell me before? I—— That alters everything."

"Will you come?"

"I'll come gladly!"

"I'm not satisfied. Are you coming because you want to show me you weren't looking for——"

"Stop! I love you! That is what would take me out to the ranch."

"You needn't worry about these people. Out there we don't imagine evil, as they do."

"Come and tell Nancy."

"I hate Nancy, but I'll come. In exactly four weeks from to-day, you start with me on the *Amsterdam* for Boston. You can choose the day you will marry me. I leave it to you, but I think the Saturday before the ship sails would suit me best."

"Then Sunday would be such a long day, with you on my hands to amuse," said the old Adela with a little laugh.

"That's a happy laugh," said Harold.

"Come on, I want my tea. Hurry!"

Mr. Pitts and Nancy were having a solemn consultation when they opened the door at the lodge.

"You are both coming to dine with us to-night," said Bridlington.

"No, we're not," answered Adela. "I have nothing to wear but a cotton rag. What would your servants say?"

"Well, then, I intend to come here immediately after my dinner. Pitts, you can take Miss Nancy up to play the banjo for you. I don't care what the servants say. My brother won't mind when he comes into his own, and by that time, Adela, you and I will be beyond his sky line!"

"You've buried the hatchet?" asked Nancy.

"Yes," said Harold, while Mr. Pitts performed wild dances round them. "And we dug up a wedding ring while we were conducting the funeral."

Turkey *for* Christmas

By Mary Eleanor Roberts

Author of "The Most Important Thing in the World," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

Explaining why Mrs. Fenton lost her washer-woman.

MONDAY would be Christmas Day. This was the Saturday before.

The long tables in the basement of the parish house of St. Titus' Church were set for the Christmas dinner of the Mothers' Meeting. The dinner was donated every year by a wealthy member of the congregation. A committee of the Ladies' Guild was in charge, with Mrs. Fenton at its head. Mrs. Fenton prided herself on her executive ability, and thought to prove it by hustling and bustling. She was giving jerky orders to the trim mulatto woman at her side:

"Four dozen forks, Linda. Be sure you count them. Eight dozen spoons. There's to be tea and ice cream both, you know. Where are those turkeys? Hasn't the man sent them yet? Seven turkeys are to go out in baskets to poor families. Each of our women who can't come to the dinner is to have a turkey for Christmas."

Linda Stiles listened deferentially. St. Titus' was a white congregation, and she would have no part in the turkey dinner except her pay for a day's work. Linda was forty years old, but she did not look it. She had languishing black eyes and a slow grace of movement, belied by her flexible, strong, capable hands. Linda had "house-cleaned" for Mrs. Fenton for twenty years and was always called on in an emergency. She also did Mrs. Fenton's washing.

The young ladies packing baskets with sweet potatoes and cranberries re-

ported a shortage of turkeys. Two more were needed.

"How provoking! I suppose the dealer ran out of small ones. It's hard to get eight and nine-pound turkeys. Some one will have to telephone him. I haven't time. Why, Edward Brockie! What are you doing here?"

A small, middle-aged man stood in the doorway. His straggling gray mustache was lifted in a smile, and he surveyed the scene and Mrs. Fenton with a critical eye.

"Came to borrow a book of his reverence. I heard the sound of crockery and thought I'd investigate. How festive we are! Is it a party?" He nodded approvingly at the ropes of bay leaves and wreaths of holly that decorated the hall.

"It's the Mothers' Meeting dinner, of course! And we're short two turkeys. Do go and telephone Smith at the Western Market and tell him he's got to send two more at once. And throw away your cigar. No one is allowed to smoke in the parish house. Linda, show Mr. Brockie where the telephone is."

Linda dutifully led the way. Mr. Brockie reflected that Elizabeth Fenton was dictatorial as usual, and he was glad he didn't have to see more of her; but then he was an old bachelor and prejudiced against ladies' society.

"Two more turkeys!" he ruminated, searching for a number in the telephone book. "Does she want 'em on the hoof?"

Linda giggled appreciatively.

"I 'spect she wants 'em picked."

"Smith!" continued Mr. Brockie with disgust. "There are a thousand Smiths in this book. Two picked turkeys—and what kind and color and how big?"

"Dry-picked is best," advised Linda under her eyelashes. "But dese yere ones dey is gettin' is all scalded," she added slyly.

"Whew! The ladies got stung, did they? They ought to have had you pick 'em out." He looked at her in amusement. "By the way, did you get one?"

Linda's pent-up feelings overflowed.

"No, and I ain't never had one. No one ain't ever give me one. I been workin' for Mrs. Fenton for twenty years, and she ain't never give me a turkey for Christmas!"

"Now you mention it, no one ever gave me one, either," said Edward Brockie. "I wonder why?" He ran his finger down the page of the telephone book. "T. Smith, Poultry. Here it is. Hello! Two more turkeys for that order for St. Titus' parish house. Two scalded turkeys. Right away. And—wait a bit! One more. Dry-picked, you understand. And larger. How much a pound? What's a good size for a turkey?" turning to Linda. "Fifteen pounds? Eighteen?"

"Yassir," breathed Linda. "Not cold storage!"

"Of course not!" To the telephone: "One eighteen-pound turkey, not cold storage, dry-picked, for a turkey expert who knows what's what. Send it to-day. Where to? What's your name?" he asked sharply.

"Mrs. Linda Stiles."

"To Mrs. Linda Stiles. Address?"

She gave it.

"All right," to the dealer. "I'll send you a check. There! That's done!" He hung up the receiver.

Linda stood with clasped hands. Her heart was full, but she had no words. If the small, tweed-clad gentleman had

been a saint in a stained-glass window, she could not have looked at him with more adoration. With a sudden, impulsive gesture, she bent forward, caught the edge of his coat, and kissed it.

"Tut! Tut!" said Edward Brockie, but he was not ill-pleased.

They went back through the dark corridor to the room where the agitated Mrs. Fenton was still oscillating between the tables and the basket packers. She was explaining Mr. Brockie to the young ladies:

"A distant cousin of mine—'E. B.,' the newspaper man, you know. You've read his column in the morning paper. Rather eccentric and lives alone. What is it, Linda?"

Linda had no mind to keep her good fortune to herself. She was ready to cry it from the housetops.

"Oh, Mrs. Fenton! Mr. Edward done give me a turkey for Christmas!" She did not know Mr. Brockie's last name and would not have used it if she had known. Mrs. Fenton had called him "Edward," and in accordance with a transplanted Southern custom, he was to be "Mr. Edward" to Linda from henceforth. "Mr. Edward done give me a eighteen-pound turkey! Dry-picked!"

"Nonsense, Linda!" said Mrs. Fenton, annoyed. "Go back and finish unpacking the ice-cream plates. What does she mean, Edward? Why should you give her a turkey?"

"Why shouldn't I? She wanted one."

"Did she ask for one?"

"No, of course not. She said she had never had one."

"Of course she has had one! Linda is well off. She has a steady husband who works for an ice company. And no children. And a comfortable house. No doubt she has often had turkey."

"Well, she said no one had ever given her one."

"Why should they give her one?"

cried Mrs. Fenton, exasperated. "She could buy one if she wanted to. She doesn't need turkey."

"But that's just it, Elizabeth. We don't want the things we need. I have always felt for that man who said that he could do without the necessities of life, but he had to have the luxuries!"

"That's nonsense!" said Mrs. Fenton sharply. "For a bright man, you are positively silly. And I wish you wouldn't come interfering —"

Whereat he took his leave.

To Linda Stiles, that Christmas was a shining light, a summit of social distinction. She gave a dinner party. Ten guests sat down to the dining table, extended to its fullest length with the kitchen table annexed. Linda's two tablecloths and a third borrowed from her sister draped the festive board. The turkey was served in the pan it was cooked in, as Linda had no platter large enough. Surrounded by a decorative border of red and green paper, it was a joy to the eye and a delight to the nose. Linda's heart beat with happy pride as her husband carved the great brown bird and served generous portions to their appreciative friends.

"A grand turkey! Yes, it was a present, shore. My Mr. Edward done



With a sudden, impulsive gesture, she bent forward, caught the edge of his coat, and kissed it.

give me dat turkey. Ain't you never hear me speak of him? A splendid gentleman he is. I 'spect he goin' to give me one every Christmas."

The week after Christmas Day, Linda, having brought home Mrs. Fenton's wash, waited in the hallway for her money. She heard a voice in the parlor:

"Such a time, my dear! My Cousin Edward Brockie. He's down with typhoid. Sick in his apartment, and de-



"You're the turkey girl, aren't you?" he panted. "You won't let them take me to the hospital, will you?"

clares he won't be moved. Of course he ought to go to the hospital. His doctor engaged a room for him and was going to ship him off at once, but he got excited and half delirious and said he wanted to die in his own bed like a gentleman. He was always queer, you know. His temperature went up, and the doctor thought it best to humor him. He has a nurse, of course, and I believe there's a kitchenette in the place, but he always went out for his meals, so there is no one but the jan-

itor to do anything. And they quarantine for typhoid now. It's a perfect mess."

Linda slipped away.

"I can find his address in de telephone book," she told herself. "Alone wid a trained nurse! De poor gentleman! Dey don't do nothin' but carry trays and make a lot of washin'. Dey don't cook and dey can't housekeep. I wouldn't want one of 'em."

She hurried home and proceeded to put her house in order. She arranged with her husband that he was to board with her sister during her absence. And the next morning she carried a suit case to Edward Brockie's apartment and installed herself in the kitchenette. The doctor welcomed her proffered service with gratitude.

"An old family servant, I suppose?" he suggested.

"Yassir," agreed Linda blandly.

The patient seemed to recognize her when, white-aproned and tranquil, she slipped into his room.

"You're the turkey girl, aren't you?" he panted. "You won't let them take me to the hospital, will you?"

"No, Mr. Edward," she soothed. "I won't let nobody take you away."

A humorous smile lighted his face.

"You pull me through," he whispered. "We'll pull a wishbone together yet! Dry-picked!"

"Shore we will, Mr. Edward."

The apartment was quarantined, and Mrs. Fenton, inquiring by phone for Mr. Brockie's health, was answered by Linda, who incidentally mentioned that she couldn't do the washing next Monday.

The lady at the other end of the line was naturally indignant.

"I never heard of such a thing! You were engaged for all winter. What right have you to go and work for Mr. Brockie? You have seen him only once!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Linda.

"I'm surprised at you, Linda." Mrs. Fenton's tone became aggrieved. "You've worked for me for twenty years, and yet you throw me over this way. And for a stranger!"

Linda's courage rose, and her voice likewise:

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Fenton, to discommode you, but I'm jest natchelly obliged to help Mr. Edward. I'm obligated to him, I am. I think a heap of him, I do. *He's de only one who ever give me a turkey for Christmas!*"



TROUBLE IN IRELAND

(Suggested by the recent Irish uprising and the arrest and imprisonment in England of the ringleaders)

SHE never was a merry isle,
For all her winsome race
That takes scant bread with hardy smile
Where peat smoke grimes the place,
That pins its faith to "little men"
Trooping, o' nights, through bog and glen.

One hope has ever torn her heart—
To rule herself, to own
No overlord who dwells apart
Placed on an ancient throne.
And when men say, "It may not be,"
She chafes within her girdling sea.

And fôr that some have lately flung
The brand and plunged the sword,
They sit the old gray towers among,
Waiting the final word
Of hope or death. Ah, England, thou
So sad thyself, show mercy now!

Pity for Irish son to die
In exile and in shame!
Struck down in home fields, he will lie
At peace, though lost the game.
The wee, cool shamrocks round him pressed,
They know their mother's child the best!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.

Some Troubles of the Circulation

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health; but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

A HEALTHY, splendidly functioning circulatory system argues for a good physique and long life, and, since in all normally constituted bodies the heart and lungs are intimately associated, if the lungs are large and strong, the heart will be of a corresponding size and vigor in order to receive the large amount of blood which the lungs oxygenate. As a rule, too, where the circulation of the blood is strong and rapid, the liver in its action partakes of this activity and assists by its secreting powers the cleansing and purifying of the blood—which is its function.

Vigor of the circulatory system produces beauty and strength both of feature and expression, and any abnormality discloses both weakness of function and ugliness of feature and expression. Those born with weak hearts rarely attain full stature; they are handicapped from birth. Very often the condition is not recognized. Otherwise intelligent parents give little heed to the evidences of weakness displayed by their children at an age when perhaps proper interference and correct hygiene would overcome the trouble. No effort is made to learn wherein the deficiency lies in a "backward" child. Congenital heart disease is easily recognized; here we have the so-called "blue" baby. But one in whom the heart is *functionally* incapable is very often overlooked.

In such a child, development is slow. The entire body is stunted; it is weak and puny. And such a child is often made to play with its fellows and in other ways is forced to do things that retard, instead of aid, its progress.

When attacked by the more serious infectious diseases—diphtheria, scarlet fever, and so forth—the struggle for supremacy becomes a one-sided affair; and yet, handicapped as these deficient are, it is amazing what a brave fight is sometimes made and won!

There is no reason why a pallid, unattractive child, suffering from weak heart should not develop into a robust, prepossessing adult. The arterial system derives its beautiful color and its marvelous impulse from the air primarily, for a bright, fresh, clear red color of the cheeks is always indicative of thorough oxygenation of the blood. We do not put enough stress upon *color* as a necessary and natural element of the body and as a builder of health and power.

There are two sources from which we obtain it—from the atmosphere and sunlight and from the mineral constituents in foods. And so, when a weakling is enabled to live out of doors, and every cell in his body is penetrated by light and sun rays, a new order of growth becomes perceptible. Proper food is the next essential, and, for those old enough, physical training.

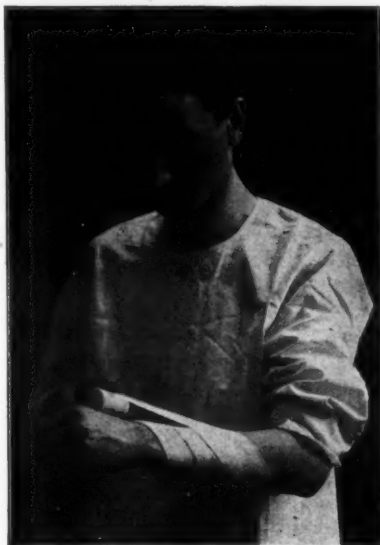
Exercises for a weak heart should begin with gentle calisthenics, preferably in the open air, increasing very gradually under the supervision of a competent teacher. Later on, graduated climbing exercises that offer slight resistance strengthen the heart muscle and give tone to the vasomotor nerves. These little nerves play a highly important rôle in disturbances of the circulation, as they dilate and contract the arteries in response to impulses from the sympathetic nervous system. This probably accounts for the greater frequency with which pallor, blushing, and the like are observed in the more emotional sex, because certain emotions cause blanching of the skin while others have an opposite effect and give rise to flushing.

To these dilator and constrictor nerves are also due excessive perspiration of the extremities, attended in many instances by an icy clamminess. Efforts to whip up the circulation prove fruitless. The condition is often outgrown as, with age, the sympathies become more stable. However, the remedy par excellence is cold salt-water rubdowns. The entire body should be scrubbed with a stiff brush and a solution consisting of one cupful of salt water to a gallon of water and sufficient ice to keep it cold. On finishing, the feet should be plunged into the water, after which the body should be rubbed dry with a coarse towel. Pursued daily, this treatment soon has a magic effect.

Unconquerable skin affections of one kind or another have recently been traced to a lack of calcium salts in the blood. Excessive perspiration, especially in the armpits, is one of these conditions. An interesting case is that of a young woman who suffered extremely from this trouble, plus eczema, whenever she wore shields or heavy clothing. Constitutional and local treatment by skin specialists was unavailing,

and she was obliged to wear light summer dresses all winter. Repeated small doses of calcium lactate relieved her.

Dilated blood vessels may not actually menace the health, but they do give rise to great discomfort, especially the varicosities so often experienced by those who stand in one position a great deal—dentists, clerks, cooks, waiters, salespeople, and the like. Despite these



For varicose veins—apply pressure with oblique adhesive strips.

occupational causes, varicose veins are more common in women, perhaps partly because their tighter clothing, tighter garters, and so forth, interfere with the return of venous blood, but certainly because of childbearing and other physiological processes that hamper the circulation.

Varicose veins are usually situated upon the lower limbs. They do not give rise to the humiliating feelings created by distensions of the blood vessels upon the face. Nevertheless, beside the pain, annoyance, and discomfort, the



Just to illustrate a bath-tub exercise.

condition is also accompanied by a good deal of physical disability, which manifests itself in the walk, carriage, and general attitude assumed by the sufferer.

An interesting thing in connection with knotty and torturous veins is that the slowly moving blood stream causes deposits of salts of calcium and potash, which result in the formation of *stones*. A sufficient number may plug up a vein and cure the varicosity; again they may give rise to more serious damage. Itching of the skin, or eczema, may be the only distress experienced from a condition of varicose veins, the existence of which, hidden from view, is not suspected.

Rubber stockings, so generally recommended for this trouble, frequently give rise to skin affections, owing to the moisture that collects beneath them. The object sought—pressure on the blood vessels to quicken the sluggish blood current—is better obtained by means of strips of surgeon's adhesive plaster—obliquely applied—that overlap each other, but do not quite encircle

the limb, as this would obstruct the circulation. The relief afforded by this simple, inexpensive treatment is said to be most gratifying.

An eczematous surface should never be washed with soap and water. When necessary cleanse it with sweet oil, wiping off with a soft towel or gauze and following with an application of carbolized zinc ointment or, if necessary, a more stimulating ointment containing resinol.

Dilated facial blood vessels constitute a serious blemish even in the mildest form, when the only indication of the trouble consists in redness or duskiness of the skin. It may be confined to the nose, but as the condition advances, it extends to the cheeks, and the blood vessels become so gorged that they stand out as red lines. Later on, the sluggish blood imparts a purplish hue to the vessels, which are now tortuously dilated. Sometimes they rupture, and the loss of blood is considerable before the hemorrhage can be checked. Everything should be done to guard against this affection's becoming chronic, as in its aggravated form it imparts to the face an almost repulsive appearance.

In the beginning, the extract and tincture of witch-hazel, applied externally, will reduce the caliber of the vessels. Brushing collodion along their course is often efficacious. When they become twisted and highly engorged, the electric needle should be resorted to.

For the redness—sometimes accompanied by itching—that precedes dis-

tension of the vessels, the following ointment proves useful:

Tannic acid	10	grains
Sublimated sulphur	$\frac{1}{2}$	dram
Carbonate of zinc	1	dram
Lard	1	ounce

The homely reference of the laity to "thin" and "thick-blooded" people is really very comprehensive, although it has no scientific value. We all know that "thick-blooded" people are those of plethoric or apoplectic habit, in whom the blood vessels are very full and the current of the blood usually sluggish. They are phlegmatic in their actions and have very florid complexions, their color mounting upon the slightest provocation. Many correspondents who come within this class write for methods to "cool the blood" and for cooling astringent lotions to relieve high color. It is now known that there exists in those so constituted an almost abnormal tendency toward coagulation on the part of the blood. Thus, when a finger is cut, the blood oozes out very thick; it does not flow rapidly. It contains an excess of such salts, notably calcium, to which this quality of the blood is due.

In those so constituted, the diet should be restricted to foods that do not make blood quickly, and yet these people are usually very fond of milk, which should be avoided, as should meat, especially beef. Everything that has a tendency to strain the heart and the arteries should be strictly forbidden, as, for instance, violent exertion, violent emotions, lifting heavy weights, and intestinal torpor. Such foods should be selected as are easily digested, preferably cold foods, while pure water should be the only drink indulged in. Then, means should be provided for clearing the intestinal tract as freely as possible. Gentle exercise is highly important, as it assists the heart, lungs, and liver to the better performance of their functions. And

last, but by no means least, cold-water bathing is essential, for its action upon the skin is manifold. It abstracts heat from the body, thus cooling the blood; it relieves the heart, lungs, and kidneys; it tones up the nervous system and dispels much of the lethargy to which this condition gives rise.

Now, these two vital necessities, *gentle exercise* and *bathing*, can be combined in a way to be presently described. When we consider that the circulation of the blood is dependent upon the action of the heart—aided by the vasomotor system—and that with every heartbeat the arterial blood is not only sent to the extremities of the body, but returned to the heart, we appreciate the value of a strong heart.

"Thin-blooded" people are not always deficient in blood quantity, but rather in quality. They usually possess poorly functioning circulatory systems. In them, the blood is poorly aerated to begin with; and when this insufficiently oxygenated blood reaches the capillaries, where it gives up its oxygen, it has little or none to dispose of. Now, as oxygen is carried by the red-blood corpuscles to every tissue of the body, upon which it acts destructively—to allow of constant rebuilding—we can readily see why these people are thin, anæmic, and cold.

Here deep-breathing exercise in the open air, warm food—especially food containing iron—an abundance of warm, sweet milk, warm baths, light, but warm clothing, especially of the extremities, inunctions of oils by means of deep-seated massage, constitute a line of treatment that will regenerate those with feebly acting arterial systems.

How much health and beauty depend upon foods is only now beginning to be realized by housewives. Of course, until recently, physicians knew so little about the subject themselves that they could not advise—merely suggest. Now

the fact that life-insurance companies are thinking of examining those in apparent health for the first suspicions of circulatory trouble, and removing this with appropriate diet, shows how far the matter of foods has advanced. "What is one man's meat is another man's poison" is more true of circulatory disturbances than anything else. Foods that do damage are eggs, fish, meat, and stock soups. Domestic science is doing a great deal for the household on this question, and "meatless cookery" is made both easy and attractive to those interested in the preservation of beauty and health, since by cutting out these foods we prevent what we afterward endeavor to arrest.

European physicians interested in the cure of vascular affections have devised several famous methods of treatment that embrace resistance. The Oertel method consists in uphill walking. The Bad Nauheim system is one of baths with resisting gymnastics, an operator being necessary as a resisting force. It has been found that these treatments do good in an endless variety of conditions, especially sluggish circulation and stiffness of the blood vessels.

The writer has found that the confines of a bathtub act as a resisting force, and one is thus enabled to combine salubrious baths with systematic exercise that proves marvelously beneficial in a short time.

The elderly, and, indeed, those well on toward middle life, find it extremely irksome, in most instances, to go through any prescribed system of gymnastics. The chief reason is that they have become "set" in their ways. They dislike anything that breaks into the routine of their days. The range of their movements is within very narrow lines, and unwonted exercise "winds" them. Many cannot run for a car.

The joints are stiff, the muscles are inelastic, and the blood stream is a sluggishly moving current.

Now, it is obviously impossible for such as these to exercise with joy. And yet that is the only kind of exercise that does good.

Instead of taking a quick shower or dip, and allowing the skin to become dry by contact with an enveloping towel or bath robe, immerse the body in a full tub of water, which has previously been softened with bran and shavings of castile soap. In the continental thermal establishments, starch is also used for its soothing effect. It is simply placed in the tub and allowed to dissolve. Whereas, bags of bran and soap are saturated in the water, then rubbed between the hands until the water is very soft.

Now, water so prepared has a delightfully lubricating effect on unused tissues, and it will be found that unusual movements can be executed. A rubber bath mat should always be placed on the floor of a porcelain tub to prevent slipping, and a movable headrest must be provided.

1. Seated with legs outstretched until the feet can press firmly against the lower end of the tub, grasp its sides and gently swing the trunk from the hips and the shoulders backward and forward as far as possible.

2. Stretch the body full length, using the foot of the tub as a lever; press the stiffened arms down until the hands rest on the floor of the tub; now raise the body up the length of the arms, never moving the feet. Lower it without relaxing a muscle.

3. Lie flat upon the back with head on the rest. Bring the right knee up toward the chin by doubling the leg on the thigh and the thigh on the abdomen. The effort will fall far short of its mark. Now grasp the leg below the knee and pull it up in a vain effort to touch the chin. Still unsuccessful after repeated efforts! Now press the head forward, pulling hard on the great muscles of the neck and shoulders. Pull



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Some Troubles of the Circulation

equally hard on the leg until the muscles of the sacrum and lumbar region are brought into play.

4. Repeat this with the left leg.

5. Lie flat on the abdomen. Bend the head back until it rests on the shoulders. Press first one leg, then the other, backward and upward in an effort to meet the head.

6. Lie on the side of the body. Stretch the face and neck over the free shoulder as far as possible.

7. Raise and lower the free arm.

8. Bring back the free foot until the hand can grasp it, pulling backward and forward upon both limbs.

9. Execute the same movement with the other side.

10. Twist and roll the body round and round without the aid of the hands, feet, or headrest.

None of these exercises are new. It is doubtful if their execution in the bath is new. Some one has wittily said: "What is true is not new, and what is new is not true." To ascertain whether the beneficial effect promised by this novel method of exercise is true, one can do no less than give it a trial.

NOTE.—Breathing exercises and a list of foods containing iron will gladly be sent to those interested.

Answers to Queries

JENNIE.—All hair has a tendency to grow darker with age. Instead of bleaching it, let me send you a tonic wash for light hair, the use of which will not only prevent your hair from "turning," but will strengthen and beautify it.

LUCILLE.—The arsenical bleach for discolored skins is never published. We will gladly send it on receipt of a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Yes, it is also used on the face, but not as a routine treatment. It is the only way in which to use arsenic for whitening the skin.

HEADACHE.—A famous American eye specialist claims that every ill to which human flesh is heir has its origin in eye troubles. Like the recently lamented Metchnikoff, he rode his hobby to death. Consequently we are now in danger of allowing the pendulum to swing to the other extreme. Now, which is your condition—reflex from the intestines or reflex from the eyes? The two are so intimately associated that it is often extremely difficult to say, yet one thing is certain: If you have your eyes refracted, and your entire intestinal tract overhauled, you will be quite sure to lose your headaches. Do you wish the name of a liver and intestinal stimulant?

YOUNG GIRL.—A girl of your age should not require rouge. If you are anæmic, you need a blood tonic. Drink two quarts of

fresh, pure milk every day, a pint at meal-times and on retiring. Sip it; do not gulp it down. Live in the open air as much as possible. I will of course send "make-up" formulae if you still wish them. Your health is more important.

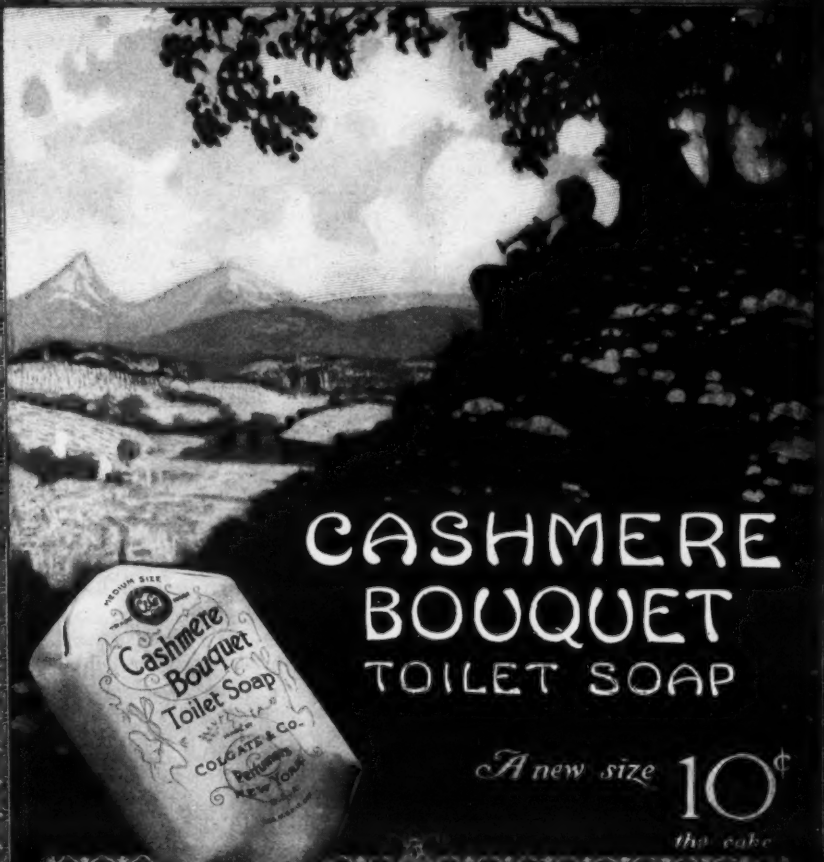
MRS. F. W.—When Doctor Osler was professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University, he was severely criticized for his apparent lack of interest in the therapeutic value of drugs. As a matter of fact, Osler is a brilliant seer, and his ideas on nature's methods, on foods, on scrums and viruses, are being justified by the present wonderful discoveries in these fields. So when it is suggested that the panacea for your manifold aches and your "sickening" appearance lies in cold-water baths, you must not scoff, but try the suggestion faithfully. Use a shower and scrub your entire body with a stiff brush. Do this daily on arising. In a month you will want to run around the block.

WORRIED.—If you are sure the growth is a wart, remove it with glacial acetic acid. Hold a clean white blotter around it, so the adjacent skin will not be touched.

FELICE.—You are ten to fifteen pounds overweight. By means of judicious dieting and simple breathing exercises, you can not only reduce your weight, but gain immeasurably in health and beauty. I will be glad to furnish directions for you to follow.

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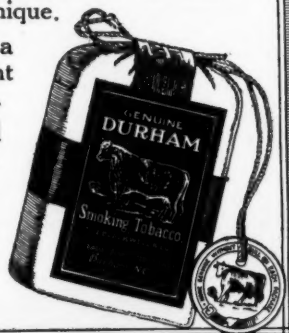
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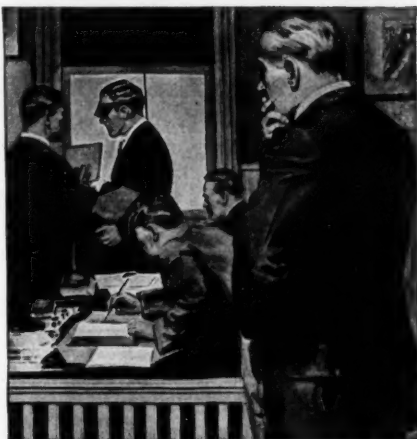


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Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or for 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of Tobacco Redeemer treatment for the habit.

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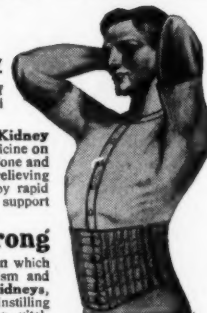
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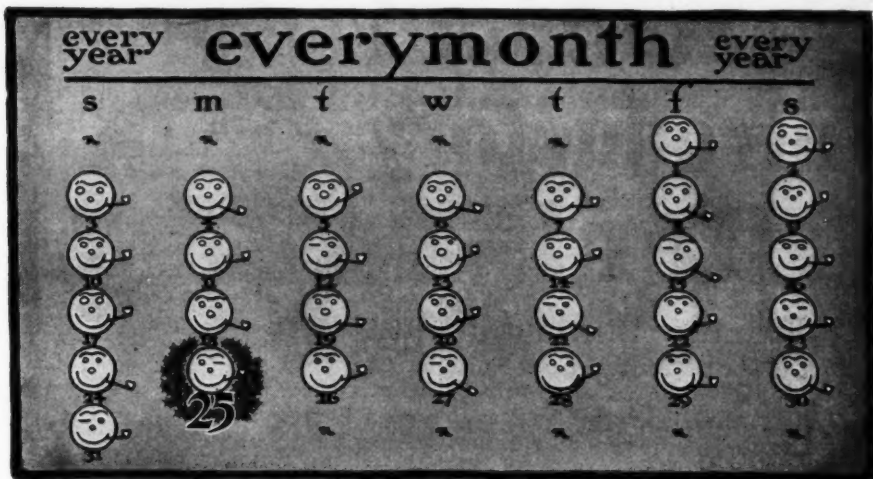
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